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Is It Judicial Or Police Bias? The Color Of Crime

By Frosty Troy

One of the great American myths is that minorities are more likely to be railroaded to prison because police and judges are universally biased.

A detailed analysis of government crime data reveals no support for the widely-held belief that the criminal justice system discriminates against blacks and other minorities.

High arrest and incarceration rates for blacks and Hispanics – and very low rates for Asians – reflect differences in offense rates, not police or judicial bias.

Oklahoma has more than a passing interest in criminal justice since the state is fourth highest in the percentage of men sent to prison, first in women.

The New Century Foundation's *The Color of Crime* is the most carefully crafted report ever made on the subject.

It finds that Asians consistently commit crime at the lowest rates in virtually all categories, followed by whites.

Hispanics are the next most likely to offend, with blacks committing most crimes at higher rates than any other group.

African Americans are 13% of the U.S. population but commit more than half the murders and robberies.

Hispanics, who are America's most rapidly-growing population, commit violent crime at about three times the white rate.

Asians commit violent crimes at about one quarter the white rate.

Blacks are 39 times more likely to commit violent crime against whites than vice versa.

Police and the justice system are not biased against minorities, despite the occasional exception.

Blacks are seven times more likely than people of other races to commit murder, and eight times more likely to commit robbery.

When blacks commit crimes of violence, they are nearly three times more likely than non-blacks to use a gun, and more than twice as likely to use a knife.

The single best indicator of violent crime levels in an area is the percentage of the population that is black and Hispanic.

Of the nearly 770,000 violent inter-

racial crimes committed every year involving blacks and whites, blacks commit 85% and whites 15%.

Blacks commit more violent crime against whites than against blacks. Forty-five percent of their victims are white, 43% are black, and 10% are Hispanic. When whites commit violent crime, only 3% of their victims are black.

Blacks are 136 times more likely to commit robbery.

Blacks are 2.25 times more likely to commit officially-designated hate crimes against whites than vice versa.

Only 10% of youth gang members are white. Hispanics are 19 times more likely than whites to be members of youth gangs. Blacks are 15 times more likely, and Asians are nine times more likely.

The U.S. incarceration rate has more than tripled since 1980, from 139 to 482 per 100,000, and the number of prisoners increased from 320,000 to 1.39 million, more than any other industrial nation.

Blacks are seven times more likely to be in prison than whites. Hispanics are three times more likely.

Whites and Hispanics have interme-

diated crime rates. There can be debate about the exact extent of the differences – the data do not make these calculations easy – but differences are a fact.

These differences are far greater than some that have given rise to significant public initiatives. Blacks are more than twice as likely as whites to be unemployed, and white household income is 60% higher than black household income.

Blacks are twice as likely as whites to drop out of high school [50%]. Race differences of this kind have led to everything from affirmative action preferences to No Child Left Behind legislation.

Blacks are about eight times more likely than whites to commit murder, and 25 times more likely than Asians to do so.

Blacks are 15 times more likely than whites to go to prison for robbery, and 50 times more likely than Asians.

The evidence suggests that deeply rooted assumptions about police bias are wrong. Many Americans believe that entire professions – police, prosecutors, judges – are systematically biased against minorities

Joseph H. Carter assails America's – and Oklahoma's – failing "lock 'em up, throw away the key" approach to crime – Page 6

This is insulting and unfair. Not only does it reflect abiding prejudice against some of the most hardworking people in America, it leads to onerous anti-racial profiling regulations that require police to fill in detailed racial information about every traffic stop, stop-and-frisk, or search.

It is profoundly destructive for minorities to have exaggerated resentments toward the society in which they live. Uncritical repetition by whites of assertions about police bias only deepens these resentments.

A proper understanding of crime rates also supports a common-sense understanding of race and is an antidote to hypocrisy. Americans do not know the exact statistics, but they know that whites [and Asians] are less likely than blacks to rob them.

Even many people who insist that black arrest rates are bloated by police bias are careful to avoid certain neighborhoods.

It is common to oppose publication of crime statistics for fear of creating "negative stereotypes," but statistical differences are the basis for important policy decisions.

Immigration is rapidly changing the population of the United States. Hispanics are now the nation's largest minority group.

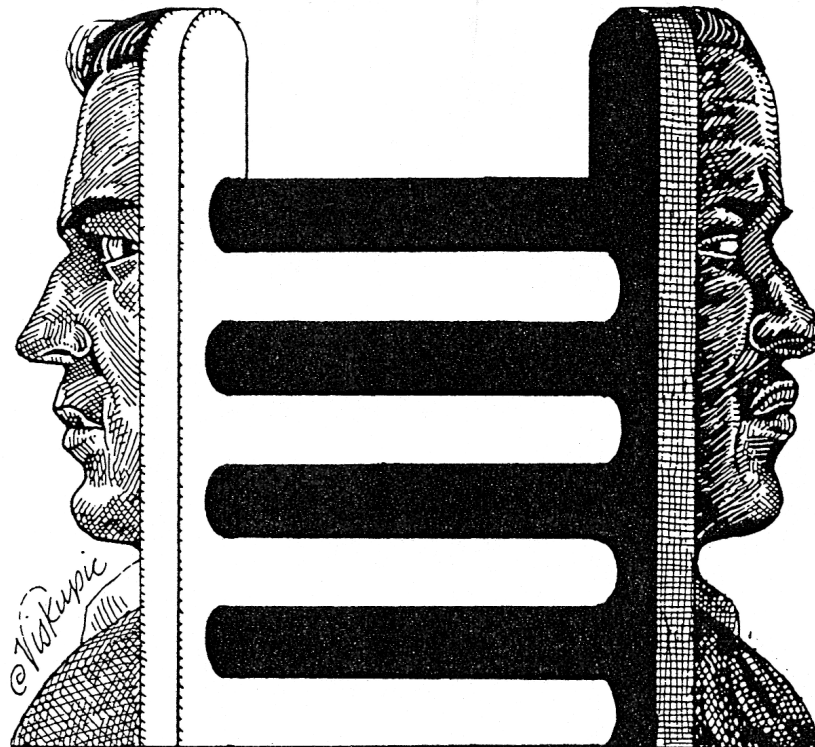
Hispanics are one of the more crime-prone groups in America. They also have high rates of illegitimacy, school failure, poverty, and welfare use.

What can Oklahomans do about crime? They could begin by thumping legislators whose law-and-order mentality drives judges to despondency with mandatory minimums and mindless sentence enhancement.

Oklahoma is nearing 25,000 in prison, with another 1,600 held in county jails for lack of prison space.

How did the Republican-controlled 2007 Legislature respond to the prison crisis? They enhanced even more felonies and shorted the Corrections budget by \$40 million.

Too bad that isn't a felony.



Observations

'First' Lady

It's never too early to ponder the next gubernatorial race. Quick question: Can Democrats extend their grip on Oklahoma government's top job for a third term in a decidedly Red State?

The short list of potential contenders includes Lt. Gov. Jari Askins, busy traveling the state making friends and influencing people, and state Treasurer Scott Meacham, whose statewide profile was boosted by full-page, Chesapeake Energy-financed ads opposing a proposed coal-fired plant near Red Rock.

An even more intriguing possibility: Kim Henry.

The First Lady never has held elective office, but knows first-hand the rigors of a statewide campaign. She's a powerful, behind-the-scenes force in her husband's administration.

As a former government, history and advanced placement teacher [eight years at Shawnee High School], she has street credibility as she advocates tirelessly for children and public education.

Further, she has charisma that would be the envy of any candidate.

The last Oklahoma First Lady to seek public office – Cathy Keating – didn't fare so well. Her congressional bid was well financed, but doomed by overconfidence – and perhaps more than a little Keating fatigue [husband Frank wasn't called the Mouth of the South for nothing].

The term-limited Brad Henry has expressed no interest in further elective office. Those close to him insist he really would be content to while away the hours at the family's lake cabin.

Perhaps the same is true of Kim Henry. But it doesn't stretch the imagination to think she could extend the Henrys' stay in the mansion at NE 23rd and Lincoln Blvd. – as Oklahoma's first woman governor.

Help Poor Kids

More than 20% of U.S. workers are functionally illiterate – operating at a sixth grade level. The U.S. will add

many fewer college graduates to its workforce in the next 20 years than it did in the past 20.

Scary facts? You bet. Much of it is caused by the lack of early childhood education for children in poverty.

Add to this the kind of sorry parenting that feeds a 30% dropout rate and you have the ingredients for a disaster.

It is sickeningly true that the U.S. has the highest child poverty rate of the 20 developed countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Children's ultimate paths are greatly influenced by what happens to them in their earliest years. Of 50 children experiencing problems reading in kindergarten, 44 will still be struggling three years later.

These same children are at the greatest risk of dropping out, becoming teen parents and failing to find productive work.

America needs to help older children, but we can also do more to set them on a better course with early childhood education. Oklahoma's system has been named the best in America by the U.S. Department of Education.

Ignore the ding-a-lings such as the far right Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, which opposes early childhood education.

Research shows that investments in early education produce a rate of return of about 16% a year – far more than such traditional economic development projects as job incubators, stadiums and business tax incentives.

These findings have been a major factor in the burgeoning movement to expand pre-kindergarten programs across the country.

Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled Oklahoma Legislature, like the Democrats before them, is not sympathetic to programs designed to help children.

We will either invest in our children or reap the results of sharply declining economy. There is no other option.



Costly

If the new Republican majority at the State Capitol wants to save taxpayers money, they should clean house at the Oklahoma Health Care Authority.

To bring you up to date, several private mental health clinics had their funding cut in 2003 by the OHCA. They went to the Capitol to complain.

That's when OHCA CEO Mike Fogarty and OHCA Lobbyist Terrie Fritz retaliated against them.

We won't bother you with the details on the fortune it has cost taxpayers as this case went to federal court twice.

A unanimous Tenth Circuit Court issued a 53-page report upholding the claims against Fogarty and Fritz.

The \$34 million awarded the clinics is in doubt since the court sent the case back to the trial court to determine a fair amount.

Shameful

The Legislature's Republican leaders – and their co-conspirator, Democratic Senate President Mike "Go-Along-To-Get-Along" Morgan – ought to be ashamed to show their faces these days.

Their bald-faced, unmerited assault on K.C. Moon, director of the state's non-partisan Criminal Justice Resource Center, is a national embarrassment and only feeds cynicism of state government.

The powers-that-be – angry that Moon speaks the truth and won't fudge up the numbers about the state's overcrowded, underfunded prison system – took the remarkable and indefensible step of slashing Moon's budget 12% ... after the budget year already was underway.

This, after a failed power-grab at session's end that would have given lawmakers the authority to name the center's director, a role that now belongs to the blue-ribbon Oklahoma Sentencing Commission.

The anti-Moon effort is driven largely by state Senate Republicans, though Speaker Lance Cargill evidently is willing to wash his hands of an old-fashioned railroading.

We typically disagree with Co-Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee on policy, but at least he usually is fair-minded and a straight shooter. In this case, his internal compass has

gone haywire.

Even the reactionary Daily Disappointment editorial page is warning legislative leaders they ought not shoot the messenger, just because they can't – or won't – solve the state's criminal justice crises.

The truth is, those working to politicize the Criminal Justice Resource Center aren't worthy of a Moon. What they deserve is the finger.

Waiting

One of the burdens carried by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services is finding good foster homes for hundreds of children abandoned or removed from troubled homes.

America is reaping the results of the sorriest parenting in its history.

The two institutions bearing the load are public schools and welfare agencies.

Who are the nation's 517,325 children – 7,898 in Oklahoma alone – waiting in the foster care system?

- 31% of foster children are between the ages of 0 and 5.
- 29% of foster children are between the ages of 6 and 12.
- 40% of foster children are between the ages of 13 and 21.
- Average number of birthdays a child spends in foster care: 2.5 [30 months].
- 42% of children experience three or more foster care placements.
- 19% [96,593] of children live in group care or institutional settings.

What are the nation's foster children waiting for?

- 250,790 [48%] are waiting to be reunified with their birth families.
- 116,031 [22%] are waiting to be adopted.
- Average time foster children have been waiting to be adopted: 42 months.

Where did the nation's children go after leaving foster care in 2006?

- 282,597 children exited foster care.
- 149,154 [54%] were returned to their parents.
- 50,567 [18%] were adopted.
- 32,848 [12%] left to live with relatives or via guardianships.
- 22,741 [8%] "aged out" of foster care at 18 or older.
- 10,722 [4%] left for other reasons [ran away, transferred, died].

If you're interested in caring for a foster child, call your county DHS office. The children are waiting.

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SPEAKERS BUREAU: To book Founding Editor Frosty Troy for your Chamber banquet, convention or other gathering, contact Helen Troy for rates and availability. Telephone: 405.525.5582. E-Mail: ftroy@fullnet.net. U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 53371, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3371.

FOUNDING EDITOR

Frosty Troy
ftroy@fullnet.net
405.525.5582

PUBLISHER

Beverly Hamilton
405.478.8700

EDITOR

Arnold Hamilton
ahamilton@okobserver.net
405.478.8700

ART DIRECTOR/WEBMASTER

Kyle Williams
405.478.8700

OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO: So then to all their chance, to all their shining golden opportunity. To all the right to love, to live, to work, to be themselves, and to become whatever thing their vision and humanity can combine to make them. This seeker, is the promise of America.

- Adapted by Thomas Wolfe

Observerscope

Oklahoma has nearly 100,000 gambling addicts – 3% of the population. It is a direct result of that mindless constitutional amendment requiring a two-thirds vote to raise taxes. The money has to come from somewhere.

Laurel: To Rep. Al Lindley, D-OKC, for requesting a legal opinion on the constitutionality of the GOP's new Oklahoma faith-based department. Didn't the GOP want to shrink government?

Dart: To Mitt Romney, biggest turkey in the GOP presidential race. He's flipflopped so many times on so many issues he qualifies for the Olympic gymnastics. Now he wants to repeal the inheritance tax but does not mention how he would make up the lost revenue.

We are saddened to learn of the death of our friend, premier newspaper reporter Ralph Marsh, 70, of Heavener. He was a cheerleader and contributor in the early days of The Observer.

Laurel: To three heroes – Donna Nigh, NAMI's Steve Buck and defender of children attorney D. Kent Meyers for recognition by Heartline, Central Oklahoma's Community Connection.

Why doesn't the Legislature pass a law regulating massage therapists? Legitimate therapists report that some operating in Oklahoma are nothing more than prostitutes.

Dart: To Gov. Brad Henry for his call for more prison beds. If he would follow the Parole Board's recommendation on freeing well-behaved non-violent offenders we could greatly reduce the prison population.

Ethics Commission member John Raley of Ponca City is dead right when he says all gifts to all elected officials should be banned. We know some you could buy for a good meal.

Laurel: To congressional Democrats, attempting to increase Alzheimer's research by \$125 million after four years of Bush neglect.

Laurel: To Ken Neal of the Tulsa World for pointing out that our legislators earn a total of \$45,550 a year – highest in seven surrounding states. But the GOP proposes freezing teacher pay at \$38,722 ranking 49th in salary.

Oklahoma has 14% of its children without health care. One in three received no medical care during an entire year. Yet Oklahoma's putrid congressional delegation voted against increasing the SCHIP – a program that provides such health care.

Dart: To the turgid twins, GOP Sens. Tom Coburn and Jim Inhofe, voting against a bill to allow unions to organize without a secret ballot. The bill was approved 51-48 but needed 60 votes.

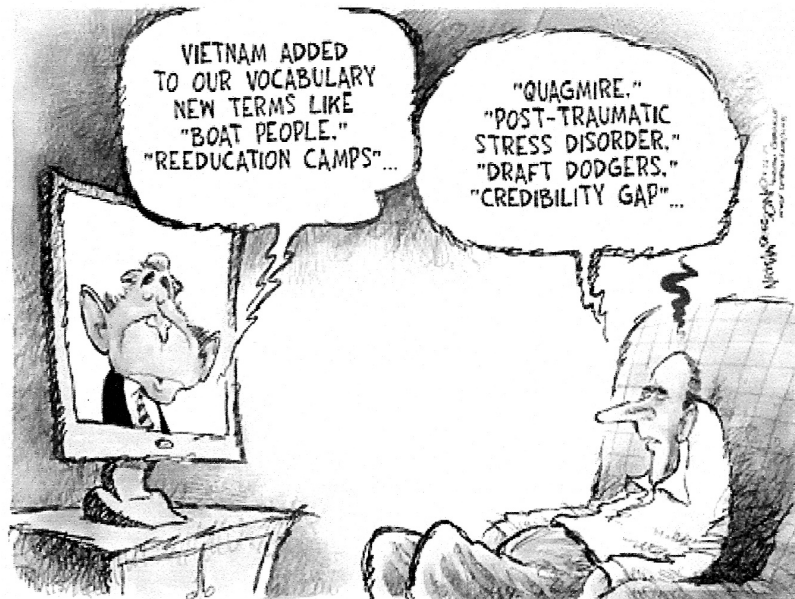
More than 50 million Americans have incomes low enough to qualify for services of the Legal Services Corporation yet funding has been cut 50%. Reagan tried to abolish it altogether.

Laurel: To the Center for America Progress for a study showing children who grow up in poverty cost the economy \$500 billion a year in higher crime rates, higher health costs and lower productivity.

Dart: To Oklahoma House Speaker Lance Cargill for a personal attack on Rep. Al Lindley, D-OKC. He said Lindley has no credibility on fiscal matters – this from a guy who pushed tax cuts while the state owed millions in unpaid bills.

Sen. Hillary Clinton has raised \$400,000 in Oklahoma. We have no problem with that except to think what that amount would do in key state legislative races. She hardly needs the money.

GOP House Speaker Lance Cargill is launching a blog which will include critiques of news stories covering him. Bravo! Bring it on! To tell him what you think – it's www.okspeaker.blogspot.com



Laurel: To the Oklahoma Gazette's Ben Fenwick for the most factual story about a proposed coal-generated plant in Oklahoma. The media have been woefully underreporting the story.

It didn't take long for Speaker Lance Cargill's 100 Ideas Foundation coffers to overflow with corporate money, thousands from Chesapeake, Wal-Mart, AT&T, Cox Communications, Lamar Outdoor billboards, etc. Could it be his campaign vehicle for governor? Duh!

Dart: To the motormouths who claim Oklahoma taxes are too high. Yet another conservative source, The Tax Foundation, reports Oklahoma is 50th in combined federal, state and local taxes.

While the GAO reports more than \$11 billion U.S. dollars have been stolen in Iraq, women there are so desperate for food for their children, they are prostituting themselves. [CNN]

Laurel: More than 84% of Oklahomans have high school diplomas. The state Commerce Department reports we're still short of college graduates at 22.4%.

Oklahoma has America's highest child abuse death rate – 4.8 deaths per 100,000. The national rate is 1.96. In the latest reporting year there were 41 deaths. More than 63,000 abuse complaints were checked by DHS and 13,827 were confirmed. They receive 250 abuse calls a day.

Dart: To state Senate Co-Leader Glenn Coffee, R-OKC, for continuing the Republican budget attack on the Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center, a fountain of corrections facts deployed by Republican legislators.

Let's hope the interim legislative Task Force on gangs comes up with solid recommendations. OKC alone has more than 4,000 members in 87 gangs. Tulsa is overrun by violent gangs.

Laurel: To Canadian Valley CareerTech for hiring Greg Winters, one of the top administrators in the state. Dirty politics at Kiamichi CareerTech cost him his job there.

Seventy-nine nursing homes have gone out of business in Oklahoma since 1994, especially hurting rural Oklahoma. Average per day cost for a patient is \$124.38.

Dart: To the nearly 60% of Oklahoma registered voters who didn't vote in the last general election. It's the dues we owe to live in a great country. Not voting is unpatriotic.

Betty Price is retiring as head of the Oklahoma Arts Council, a post she has held since 1983. She has done a superb job against stiff political odds. Some rednecks don't appreciate culture.

Laurel: To Oklahoma's Dr. John Pitman, honored by Exceptional Parent magazine with their Distinguished Service Award for his quality of care for psychiatric disorders – especially Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD].

Be careful who you run into or who runs into you – Oklahoma has more than 800,000 uninsured motorists. Some 40,000 are estimated to be in Oklahoma illegally. [Department of Public Safety report]

Dart: To the reigning GOP Legislature for double-speak. They criticized Dems for taking loot from special interest groups. Now they're up to the elbows, including Speaker Lance Cargill's \$250,000 in the first six months of the year.

Attorneys are the butt of way too many jokes considering that average attorneys spend 50 hours a year in pro bono services. Example: 170 students at the Tulsa University Law School are volunteering at nine non-profit organizations.


Laurel: To the George Kaiser Foundation, funding a second Educare Center next to Hawthorne elementary. The centers feature high quality care for some of the 10,000 Tulsa children living in extreme poverty.

"They [Republican legislators] wanted a puppet. The way it is, the Oklahoma Justice Resource Center has autonomy. This [GOP budget gutting] has nothing to do with policy and everything to do with politics." – State Rep. Lucky Lamons, D-Tulsa.

Dart: To government-bashing James Dunn, leading a petition drive for 138,970 signatures. If he has his way most statewide elected officials would be limited to two terms. It would be a disaster.

In case you quit counting, the \$250 billion more Bush received to continue the Iraq war is costing every American man, woman and child \$800.

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

How many Bush Administration officials does it take to change a light bulb? The answer is seven:

- One to deny specific knowledge about a light bulb needing to be replaced and characterizing the light bulb as merely "dim."

- One to attack and question the patriotism of anyone who voices doubts about the light bulb while extending Executive Privilege concerning the number of light bulbs that may or may not need replacing.

- One to blame the previous administration for the need of a new light bulb and keep promoting how the need for changing light bulbs is tragically different now.

- One to arrange the invasion of a country rumored to have a secret stockpile of dangerous light bulbs but also has the world's third largest supplies of flashlight batteries and candles.

- One to get together with political appointees and lobbyists to figure out how to funnel \$1 million for each light bulb that gets replaced to corporations that also supplied the political appointees and lobbyists.

- One to arrange a secret place to hide people who might have information on why the "perceived" light bulb failure resulted in an increase in darkness.

- One to organize the "fair and balanced" Fixed News organizations to begin a non-stop campaign to put fear in the hearts of the people who earn their incomes changing light bulbs and to obsess on the lives of broken celebrities in "reality based lifestyles," while being completely oblivious to the dismantling of the Constitution, the economy and our privacy.

Can you see clearly now?

Paul R. Maxwell
Choctaw

Editor, The Observer:

I wrote the following letter to the Oklahoman:

"Your front-page story, 'Saluting a Century of Scouting,' was bittersweet for me, and probably for many others. The benefits of scouting are definitely self-evident, as I recall growing up in the Texas panhandle with a twin brother who was constantly working on merit badges, attending meetings, and doing many worthwhile activities that enabled him to become an Eagle Scout, the organization's highest honor. By learning leadership and gaining confidence, Chryst was later able to seek and attain an appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy, to graduate, to learn to fly, to work at the Pentagon.

"Today, these same qualities have helped this 50-year-old community-minded individual maintain a successful law practice in Washington, DC, serve as an elder in his church, and regularly prepare hot nutritious breakfasts for some of DC's inner-city homeless.

"But also today, because of their policy regarding homosexuality, the Boy Scouts of America will not accept people like my brother, who are openly gay.

"What a tragedy that such a great institution has such a misinformed understanding of human sexuality."

When the Oklahoman printed my letter in their opinion page column, they deleted the first and last sentences, effectively canceling out my opinion and silencing my view.

Homophobia impacts our state and our nation. If given the opportunity, it is possible for people to unlearn homophobia. But that requires open, honest, unfiltered communication; something one would expect from a responsible statewide newspaper, particularly in a section they call "Your Views."

Robyn Lemon Sellers
Oklahoma City

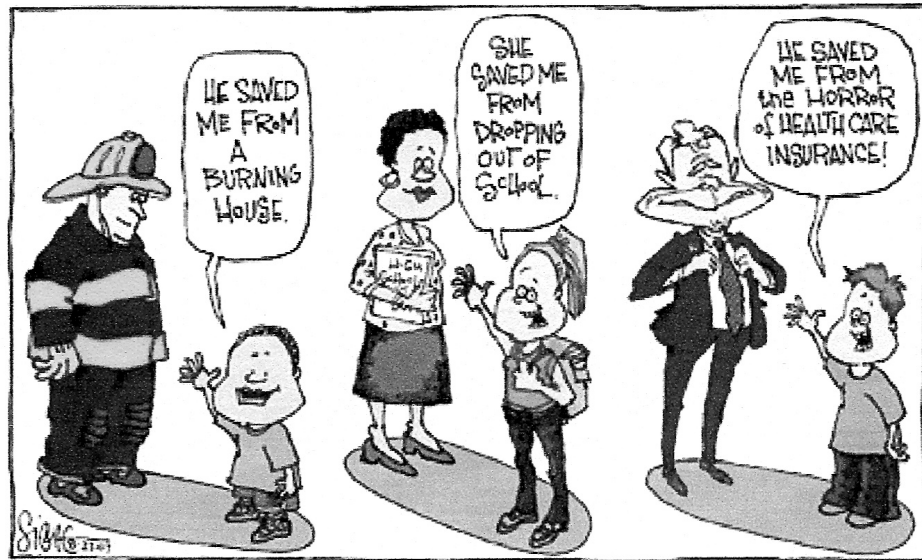
Editor, The Observer:

The other day milk was selling in a New England supermarket at \$4.79 a gallon. Down the street, regular gasoline was going for about \$3.04 a gallon. One of the factors driving up the cost of milk is the ethanol stampede. American ethanol is made from corn, and the more corn we use to feed our cars, the more expensive is the corn left over for our livestock.

Children from low-income families are either going to have to accustom themselves to drinking gasoline or not drink milk. If we must have ethanol, we could import it from Brazil, where they can make it cheaper from sugar cane than Americans can make it from corn. But Brazilian ethanol, thanks to the agribusiness lobby and a 54-cent-per-gallon import tariff, is kept out of the country. Politicians of both parties, mad for winning elections in corn-growing Iowa, do not mention the cheaper Brazilian stuff.

Ethanol is a failure as a practical short-term gasoline substitute but it is a political success. It will be years before ethanol has even a minor beneficial effect. The world is many years away from inventing and deploying oil substitutes. Two measures of immediate effect could be put in place now.

The first is to reduce speed limits on roads built with federal dollars. The second is a tax on the horsepower and weight of new cars but this



should be an annual tax. Don't hold your breath that these measures will be actualized.

Frank P. Belcastro
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

Everyone has known a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a co-worker [if you're lucky enough to be employed!] who has become caught up in this [legalized loan sharking] nightmare. It is the most insidious and despicable thing to be allowed to happen to ordinary citizens.

These people, for the most part, have had catastrophic medical bills, lost employment [their job was shipped overseas!] or any number of other horrors beyond their control and for the government to allow corporate robberies such as this is unholy.

This country has lost the nets that once were in place for protection from legal thefts by the wealthier members of our society. We once had usury laws in this nation that would have these crooks [G.E.?] where they belong ... in prison!

The only way to reinstate any of these protections is through our votes and through our protests. Start screaming loud and long to these so-called candidates for leadership. Tell them we will not support this type of status quo any longer. Tell the corporate boards they are bandits, pirates and common thieves and refuse to stop yelling about it to the friends, the relatives, the neighbors, the co-workers, the publishers of newspapers, the producers of documentary films, the six o'clock so-called "news" media.

Let your voices be heard!

Darla Sparks
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

In the event of a successful terror attack in the U.S. between now and the upcoming election, is it possible that martial law could be declared by the president? We are already experiencing some aspects of martial law, so what is to prevent an official edict in order for Bush and company to stay in power?

He ["Dub"] has previously stated that he would prefer being a dictator; his recent comment was that the government belongs to him. [A response to a question about the Justice Department mess was something to the effect that "no one is going to tell me how to run my government."]

We need to pray that the Democrats will get off their rusty dusties, grow some backbone, and do what they were elected to do.

Tom Ellis
Okeene

Editor, The Observer:

The overwhelming number of bankruptcies in America is due to medical reasons. Medical costs and profits have spiraled insanely upward. It's time we did something about the medical industrial complex.

Whether or not you like Michael Moore, see his movie "Sicko." It is an excellent work. It's non-partisan; even Fox News praised it. It will win an Oscar.

Nearly 50 million Americans cannot afford or are denied health insurance. Ignore them you say, Universal Health Care would be socialism? You hypocrites. We already have socialism in our school system. I don't have children yet I pay for your kids' education. G. Bush's privatization of schools won't change the socialism part at all; I'll still pay for your kids, but it will be to a company that will cut out necessities so they can make big profits and they won't be accountable to you or me.

The U.S. is the only industrialized country without universal health care; we rank 37th in health care. The medical trade has spread many lies. People in other countries with UHC live comfortably and longer, doctors are well paid; you can go to any doctor you wish, people are not overtaxed [factor in the health care premiums you pay]. Insurance companies don't deny you procedures or care. And people don't have long waits. The difference is that there aren't any \$30 pills. Like schools, we think "We" instead of "I." What a healthier, more productive America.

Jim Stodola
Corinth, TX

Editor, The Observer:

Yale's Skull and Bones - or as they should be referred to as Wealthy Grave-Robbers and Desecrators of Historical Artifacts - should send the bones they claim to be Geronimo's back to his homeland so DNA can determine if they are Geronimo's or those of any other Native American.

If you sick degenerate funny boys need bones then I suggest sending the younger Bushes to dig up Prescott to be used as a ritualistic talisman. They could make jujus out of him.

After all, Geronimo was defending what was his and Prescott was always taking someone else's. By the way, I don't care how many leaders of government or industry belong to this sick and ghoulish club. Send the bones back today or prove the entire thing is a huge lie, just to denigrate Native Americans.

Karen Webb
Moore

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Frosty's Notebook

A Good Law

I normally deplore the Legislature's incessant mandates on public education, but Rep. Ann Coody's new legislation stressing financial literacy is right on target.

Issues that normally would be handled at home have obviously fallen victim to parents who are as financially illiterate as their children.

House Bill 1476, by Coody, R-Lawton, creates the Passport to Financial Literacy Act. It requires financial literacy instruction for all Oklahoma secondary school students to help them avoid money problems in their adult years.

Thankfully, her measure allows individual school districts to decide whether the components of personal financial literacy instruction will be incorporated into one or more existing courses of study or into a separate new course.

Under the new law, students can be instructed in the elements of personal financial literacy anytime in grades seven through 12.

House Bill 1476 will be implemented beginning in the 2008-09 school year.

Americans now owe \$850 billion in credit card debt, thanks to a greed-driven industry that sprinkles America with credit cards like confetti. The average household owes \$9,659. The average cardholder has seven cards.

Thanks to a sorry 1996 U.S. Supreme Court opinion striking down limits on credit card fees, the late penalty has gone up 168% and the average fee for exceeding credit limits is up 138%.

The Court struck again in 1997, ruling that banks only have to follow the interest rates and fees in the state they're based in. Some then sent the rate soaring to 20%.

The industry flooded America with eight billion credit card applications last year, a 30% increase over 2005.

Sad to say, many of those taking advantage of a lack of young people's financial literacy are institutions such as OU and OSU – raking off a percentage.

According to Mother Jones magazine, the average American household spent 14% of its disposable income paying off debts. The savings rate of the average American last year was 0.5%.



It's hard to fault average Americans when they have a President who has sent the federal debt to more than \$7 trillion, and continues to wage a no-win war off-budget – \$500 billion to date.

Last year homeowners spent more than \$150 billion to payoff credit card and other debts. Those who file for bankruptcy are learning that the credit card industry lobbied through the new law that severely tightens bankruptcy rules.

Medical bills cause half of bankruptcies, not credit deadbeats.

Why won't Congress act? Last year top credit card companies donated \$8.9 million to congressional campaigns.

Is credit card income profitable? Last year the industry earned \$90.1 billion in interest and \$44.2 billion in fees.

As Mother Jones noted, Dante's Inferno holds its seventh circle in hell for usurers.

Fact Vs. Fiction

The biggest canard you will hear – especially from Republican politicians – is that we're spending more money than ever on public education, "throwing money" at schools that won't improve them.

The truth? The Republican-controlled Oklahoma Legislature this year presided over the smallest percentage of the state budget public education has ever received.

In the past five years, national per-pupil spending by public school districts has increased by only 0.7%, according to a new report by the Economic Policy Institute.

During that period, the share of spending on "regular" education has fallen by 2% while spending on special-needs programs has grown.

The study – Where is the Money Going? Changes in the Level and Composition of Education Spending, 1991-96 – examines shifts in the amounts and composition of spending in nine representative school districts. Among the findings:

- By the 1996 school year, regular education accounted for only 56.8% of all school spending, down from 58.6% in 1991.

Rules To Govern

During the Henry Bellmon Administration, Gov. Bellmon asked me to address agency heads. I wrote The Ten Commandments of Public Service, which I recently discovered in my files. I share it with you:

I. If I accept appointment to serve my state, I will contribute the time and talent it takes to make for a job well done. If I find for any reason I cannot do so, I will promptly resign.

II. I will scrupulously avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, accepting no favors or gifts that would compromise me or bring dishonor to Oklahoma.

III. I will keep uppermost in my mind that I do not work for an appointing authority or a political party or a private entity. Once appointed, I work for the people of Oklahoma.

IV. I will treat every dollar as if it were my own, husbanding the resources of the state with the same prudence I use in my own business affairs.

V. I will read all laws and regulations affecting my position, refusing to hide behind ignorance of the law, following the law in every instance.

VI. I will not use my position to attempt to control day-to-day activities nor will I be a rubber stamp for administrators charged with operations of the agency.

VII. I will conduct the public's business in a public way, following both the open records and open meeting laws, not trying to do indirectly what the law forbids.

VIII. I will tolerate no illegal or unsavory behavior on the board, agency or commission which I serve, preferring resignation to dishonor.

IX. I will insist upon quality performance and compliance with the law from all of those affected by the policy decisions of my board, agency or commission.

X. I will use my position to tell the positive story about Oklahoma, its remarkable people, and its magnificent potential.

- Special education spending grew to 19% of all school spending in 1996, up from 17.8% in 1991.

- School lunch and breakfast programs grew to 4.8% of total school spending in 1996, compared to 3.3% in 1991.

- Bilingual education programs increased from 1.9% of total school spending in 1991 to 2.5% in 1996.

Some districts have had to reduce per-pupil spending on regular students in response to the combined pressures of enrollment growth, inflation and the need to spend more on special populations.

To conclude that special education and other special programs have grown at the expense of regular education is based not on data, but rather on speculation about what would have happened to regular education in the absence of the growth of special programs.

Public educators voting Republican might as well shoot themselves in both feet.

Growing Old

If my body were a car, this is the time I would be thinking about trading it in for a newer model.

I've got bumps and dents and scratches in my finish and my paint job is getting a little dull, but that's not the worst of it.

My fenders are too wide to be considered stylish. They were once as sleek as a little MG; now they look more like my mother's old Buick.

My seat cushions have split open at the seams. My seats are sagging.

Seat belts? I gave up all belts when Ben & Jerry's opened a shop in my neighborhood.

Air bags? Forget it. The only bags I have these days are under my eyes.

Not counting the saddlebags, of course.

I have soooooo many miles on my odometer. Sure, I've been many places and seen many things, but when's the last time an appraiser factored life experiences against depreciation?

My headlights are out of focus and it's especially hard to see things up close.

My reaction is not as graceful as it once was. I slip and slide and skid and bump into things even in the best of weather.

My whitewalls are stained with varicose veins. It takes me hours to reach my maximum speed. I'm burning fuel at an inefficient rate.

But here's the worst of it – almost every time I sneeze or cough, my radiator seems to leak.

Run For Your Life!

"Dick Cheney flew to Norfolk Friday to speak at a rally for an Expeditionary Strike Group of 2,000 Marines just back from Iraq. These guys are so brave. They didn't even flinch when he said he wanted to shoot straight with them."

– Argus Hamilton

'Lock 'Em Up, Throw Away Key' Won't Work

By Joseph H. Carter

Are American people more criminally inclined than folks elsewhere around the world?

That seemingly would be a valid question based on statistics in the new 2007 "Pocket World in Figures" compiled by the London-based Economist magazine.

The United States, with a population of 297 million, holds 2,135,901 humans in prisons.

China, with a census of 1.3 billion people has only 1,548,498 of its population in prison.

With more than four times the population of the U.S., Communist China now has imprisoned 587,000 fewer of its people than the United States. Sadly, while the statistic is not published in the new booklet, Oklahoma is among the leaders in the nation's incarceration rate.

HOW EMBARRASSING: U.S. SECOND ONLY TO RWANDA

It is outrageous that America is second behind Africa's corrupt Rwanda's incarceration rate of 1,024 per 100,000 people. The U.S. imprisons 719 inmates per 100,000 of its people. Russia is third with a rate of 582 by the same measure. China does not even appear in the Economist's top-tier 23 countries listed in the inmate per capita column.

What gives? Are Americans more criminally inclined than most other citizens of the world? I think not. The problem lies in zany laws, ignorant lawmakers, arrogant prosecutors and a largely uninformed or misled public.

Calls for "law and order" too often fly in the face of justice, forgiveness and proper treatment of problem citizens.

The same Economist statistics manual does not list the United States among the top 20 countries with "total recorded crimes per 100,000 population." Nor does the U.S. show up among the lists of boozing nations. There are 23 countries that lead in beer drinking, 22 nations among wine sippers and 24 leaders of "alcohol drinks." The U.S. is not on any of those lists.

THE PARADOX OF AMERICA'S INCARCERATION FRENZY

The United States does lead the world in numbers of Nobel Prize winners in peace, economics, physics, chemistry and physiology or medicine. From 1896 through 2004, U.S. athletes won twice as many summer Olympic medals as the runner-up country. Statistically, America leads in scores of other positive endeavors cited.

Why then does the U.S. lead the world in the numbers of folks who are branded as convicts? Why is Oklahoma a leading incarcerator?

During the past half century, as newsmen, Frosty Troy, the founding editor of The Oklahoma Observer, and I spent great energy and much time seeking reform of the jurisprudence system. Both of us visited the prisons and exposed corruption and misconceptions that cried out for complete reform. We wrote, wrote and wrote.

Through our own media, along with other journalists, Troy more than I told Oklahoma citizens, voters, politicians and officers of the courts that the criminal system was wrong. Rotten. And it remains such.

WHERE ARE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES?

"Lock 'em up and throw away the key" remains the common wisdom in the

Congress Moves To Protect Indian Women

By Jim Lobe

Acting in major part on a recent report by Amnesty International and Native American activists, the U.S. Congress is moving to provide additional funding to protect Native American women who suffer disproportionate levels of rape and other sexual abuse.

The House of Representatives approved a bipartisan measure that would provide \$1 million for the creation of a tribal sex offender and protection order registry to identify serial perpetrators of such assaults, most of whom are non-Indian.

The same measure, which was approved by a 412-18 vote, provides an additional \$1 million to conduct a baseline study on sexual violence committed against indigenous women in the U.S. It would better identify the extent of abuse and how best to address it. Both appropriations have already been approved by the Senate.

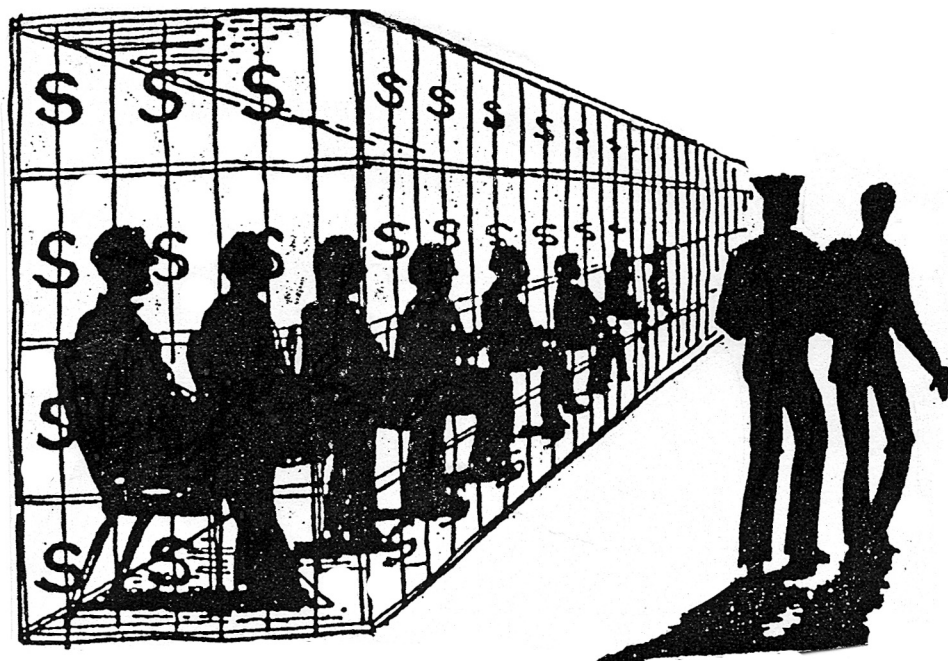
AMNESTY REPORT GALVANIZES CONGRESS

Amnesty International [AI], which published a 113-page report on the problem in April, praised the House action but called for more steps to address the problem.

The report, which was based on Justice Department data and research in three states with proportionately large Native American populations - Oklahoma, Alaska and South Dakota - found indigenous girls and women suffered most from these deficiencies.

One support worker in Oklahoma, for example, told AI that only three of her 77 active cases of sexual and domestic violence had been reported to the police.

And many Native American woman interviewed on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota said they could not think of a single Native American woman within the community who had not been subjected to sexual violence at some point in their lives, and that many had suffered several assaults by differ-



ent perpetrators. U.S. and Oklahoma. That attitude is an expensive, destructive and plainly wrong approach. It is most certainly very much at odds with the basic principles of Christianity and Judaism.

Beyond that frame of mind, the Economist's statistics reveal other causes. The new book lists 24 countries with the "highest education spending." The U.S. is not on that list. Fortunately, it neither is on the list of 32 countries with the "lowest education spending."

For the world's richest nation to fail in devoting ample resources to schools; to give poor pay for classroom teachers and to demonstrate lack of concern about day-to-day problems in education are among causes of its criminal incarceration.

Do God-fearing Americans care less about their children than families in Yemen, Cuba and Mongolia who are listed atop the list of "highest education spending" as a percentage of gross national product? The U.S. fails to make that list of 21 nations that are cited.

BILLIONAIRE GEORGE KAISER GETS IT

The staid Wall Street Journal on Aug. 9 reported that "pre-school gets high marks." It cites the "key backing from George Kaiser, owner of Tulsa-based Kaiser-Francis Oil Co." for seeing that all of Oklahoma's 4-year-olds have preschool opportunity.

Kaiser, who also owns Bank of Oklahoma, plunked down \$20 million and employed two lobbyists to convince the Legislature about the need for formal early childhood education. Kaiser is a wonderful billionaire!

The Journal quoted Kaiser as saying "the most effective argument among conservative Republicans is that the folks we are helping are already in day care so that we are not taking them from a loving home."

The Journal continued to quote the man it described as a billionaire oilman as saying "the kids will end up as productive citizens rather than in the correctional system."

Exactly! That's what Frosty Troy and I preached years ago as capitol correspondents and Frosty continues to champion while I, choosing a career inside government, fought to achieve. The first speech I wrote for President Johnson was

See INCARCERATION Page 8

ent perpetrators.

Congress should provide more funding to that part of the Violence Against Women Act [VAWA] that pertains to Native American women, particularly those provisions to ensure that tribal courts and police have the wherewithal to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse.

MORE SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSES NEEDED

This is especially true in rural areas. The Indian Health Service and contract facilities can hire more Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners capable of conducting timely forensic medical examinations after assaults take place.

The Amnesty report, "Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Sexual Violence in the USA," found that indigenous women are at least 2.5 times as likely to be sexually assaulted in their lifetime as other women in the U.S.

At least one in three indigenous women will be raped or otherwise subject to sexual violence in their lifetime.

At least 86% of reported rapes or other sexual assaults against indigenous women are committed by non-Indian men who are only very rarely prosecuted or punished, according to the report.

Registered Native Americans, who make up about 1.4% of the country's 300 million citizens, are distributed among some 560 tribal governments across the country.

RAPE, ABUSE AND MURDER ARE COMMON

"American Indian and Alaska Native women are living in a virtual war zone, where rape, abuse and murder are commonplace and sexual predators prey with impunity," Sarah Deer, an attorney at the California-based Tribal Law and Policy Institute, told Inter Press Service in April.

See WOMEN Page 7

PUBLIC FORUM

It Must Not Be All About The Testing

By Sharon Edge Martin

Most mothers with more than one child can tell you why tests should not be the only criteria of a student's progress. I offer my own children as an example.

My son, a lackadaisical student, scores well on tests. So do I. We've discussed this trait, deciding it is more a measure of our confidence than our knowledge. Also, both of us are game players. We can read a hand of cards or a domino layout, and we enjoy the challenge. A multiple choice test is a kind of game – eliminate the obvious wrong answers and weigh what's left without thinking too deeply.

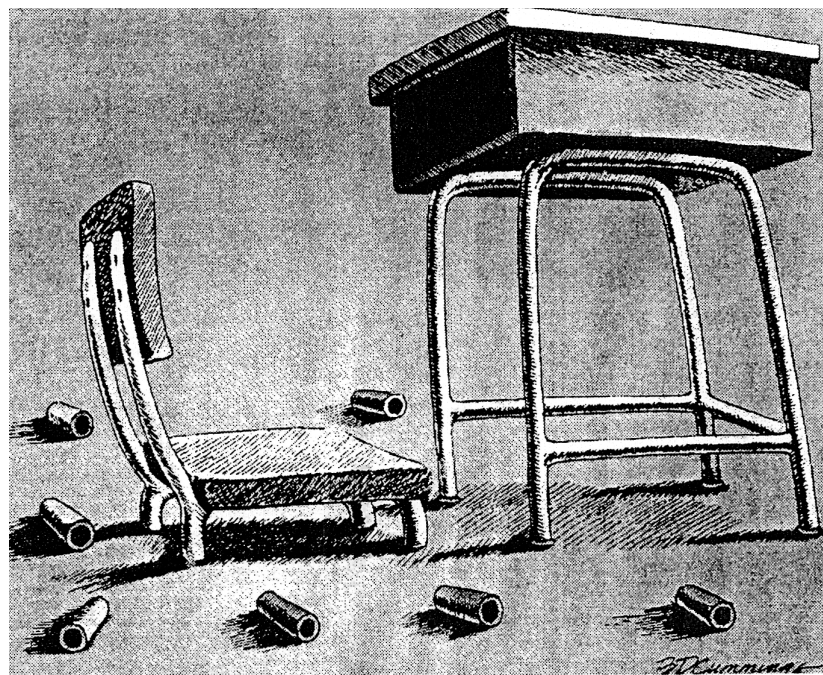
My daughter, a scholar, always wondered why her brother was placed in the gifted and talented program at school and she wasn't. How could I tell her that the decisions were based on test scores without shaking her confidence, a necessary test-taking trait? In fact, based on a test score, they tried to place her in a special reading program, ignoring the fact that the year before she had won a prize for reading more books than any other student in her class.

MY FAILING SCHOLAR NEEDED GLASSES

Here's where logic failed someone. This straight-A student scored an abysmal two on a reading test. Monkeys choosing random buttons score better than this, but only her classroom teacher and I questioned the score. Turns out, my daughter needed glasses. And at 25, not only is she an avid reader with a graduate degree, but she is a gifted writer, as well. None of her test scores could have predicted this outcome.

I believe in tests. They help me measure student growth. I especially believe in content-area tests that teachers administer and grade themselves. If a student repeatedly misses a certain type of question, a teacher delivers a targeted lesson for that student. If several students miss certain questions on a test, the teacher may need to re-teach the material or teach it in a different way.

I believe in teaching students how to take tests. Tests are a fact of life; there-



fore, test-taking is an essential life skill. One of the best ways of teaching students how to take tests comes from the work of Ruby Payne. She suggests that students learn how to create multiple choice and true/false questions. If you can ask questions, you understand the logic behind the answers.

OTHER FACTORS IMPACT TEST SCORES

No matter how much a student knows, and no matter how well he or she has made the art of test-taking his or her own, the student can score poorly. Nutrition, health, family issues, and myriad other things can wreak havoc with test scores. And no amount of standardizing can help a group of kids with fewer cultural experiences score as well as a group whose members experience travel, art, theater and dozens of different learning camps in the summer.

There are too many variables to make any test the sole criterion for a decision. Tests should be used for the purpose of helping students and teachers improve their skills. Other uses of tests must be approached with caution.

– The author, a public school teacher, lives in Oilton

How About 'Incentivizing' The Speaker's Pay?

By Michael Walcutt

Apparently it is time for my annual response to the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs and other so-called experts in the field of what is best for teachers. There seems to be two main points this year: merit pay and the number of days that teachers work.

It is true that Oklahoma teachers work 180 days per year. I will guarantee, though, that teachers work more minutes per day than any other profession. From the time the first bell rings until the last bell, teachers are working every single minute of the day.

Studies have shown that the average blue-collar worker actually spends only 5.4 hours of every day in productive work, and white-collar workers [the ones who keep writing letters about how little teachers work] spend an average of 4.3 hours daily being productive.

The most recent [OCA] column states that teachers make 2% more per hour than the average professional wage, but we work almost 100% more in that

WOMEN

From Page 6

"In many tribal communities, rape and molestation are so common that young women fully expect that they will be victims of sexual violence at some point."

Federal and tribal statistics may understate the degree of violence suffered by Native American women, according to the report.

It noted that fear of retaliation and the lack of confidence that the authorities will take allegations of assault seriously tend to reduce reporting of sexual assault throughout the United States, as well as in Native American communities.

Jurisdictional issues have often been a major obstacle to successful prosecution of sexual assaults, particularly in states such as Oklahoma where land owned by nearly 40 different tribes adjoin each other and are often intersected by state land in a "checkerboard" pattern.

POOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

"Being an Indian woman rape victim in the state of Oklahoma usually means that law enforcement officers spend as much time trying to determine the appropriate responding authority as they do in protecting you from the rapist," Renee Brewer, family violence coordinator with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, told Amnesty. Cases involving multiple jurisdictions often result in no prosecution at all.

While jurisdictional problems are serious, tribal authorities also often lack the means to respond in a timely way, let alone investigate and prosecute, cases in the rural areas that make up many U.S. Indian reservations.

By under-funding Native law enforcement agencies, the federal government has also denied adequate resources to the Indian Health Service

The fact that non-Native perpetrators cannot be tried in tribal courts has actually drawn sexual predators to tribal areas to assault women, because they know that federal prosecutions are rare in those areas, according to Deer.

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hour.

Now let's talk about merit pay. House Speaker Lance Cargill has proposed that the only raises teachers should receive in the future should be merit based.

What happened to the promise the Legislature made two years ago to raise teacher pay to the regional average?

I will seriously consider merit pay for teachers when lawyers, doctors and politicians agree to merit pay. If a lawyer loses a case, regardless of the situation, he gets minimum wage. If a doctor can't cure my illness in a week, he gets minimum wage. If a politician won't keep a promise, he gets minimum wage.

If merit pay is so great for teachers, whose raise would then be tied to the performance of 8-year-olds and teenagers who could care less about state tests, then let's approve it across the board.

Cargill is quoted as saying, "... reward excellence and incentivize success."

First, nice job creating a new word.

Second, if that is truly his belief, I expect to see a news report about how Cargill has returned 90% of his salary to the people of Oklahoma.

– The author is a Muskogee educator

A Sure-Fire Revenue Raiser: Stupidity Tax

By Larry D. Dobie

Too bad there is no tax on stupidity – the government coffers would be overflowing.

After all the literal blood, sweat, tears and tyranny of the last eight years and minority concentration of wealth unparalleled in our nation's history, there are still morons out there who are for Republicans.

In passing, I said to someone: "Well, how's your Hillary meter?" He almost jumped!

"Why I won't vote for Hillary if the earth stopped."

I said, "Well, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" [figuring he'd heard that one].

His eyes glazed over. "Ain't voting for that Obama, either. Can you imagine introducing him – 'Here is President Obama.' Can you imagine that!"

Qualified now as a Moron, I knew he was going for Moron With Oak Leaf Cluster.

Satisfied that I was losing his attention, I said, "Well, [former state Democratic Chairwoman] Lisa Pryor sure did a great job paying down the state party's debt and Ivan Holmes has a good agenda for energizing the grassroots of the party."

He had no idea what I just said. I knew then, I had to confirm: "Rise and hereafter let it be known, you are a Moron With Oak leaf Clusters."

– The author lives in Claremore

State Government Wins C-Plus Grade

Editor's Note: Governing magazine has graded the 50 states and the District of Columbia on state governing. Oklahoma received a C-minus. Here is a summary of the findings:

It can't be a lot of fun trying to run Oklahoma, even if you happen to be governor, as Brad Henry currently is.

In a state where past legislatures have been able to run over the chief executive, the Henry Administration has done well to keep dialogue open, but the state's deeply decentralized agency structure can provide its own obstacles to government management.

Last fall, the governor had to intervene in a public dispute between the Office of Juvenile Affairs and the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth.

When a performance audit in November highlighted waste and inefficiency in the use of state-owned vehicles, one agency director blamed decentralization for the lax oversight.

PROBLEMS STYMIE GOOD PLANNING

Problems such as those can stymie good efforts in planning and management. And even when agencies and the state are aligned on their priorities, there's often simply not enough money in the budget to accomplish what's needed.

Departmental stubbornness has complicated planning in information technology, for example. For more than a decade, every agency has been required to submit annually a three-year information technology plan.

"The intent is to make sure the state has consistency, interoperability, and that the agencies aren't going in different directions," says Joe Fleckinger, director of Oklahoma's Information Services Division.

But, he says, "agencies can operate very independently, so there's not very good consistency."

STRONG CAPITAL PLANNING

On another planning front, the state's Long-Range Capital Planning Commission drafts a strong capital improvement plan and augments the package by sending specific reports to the Legislature for each agency.

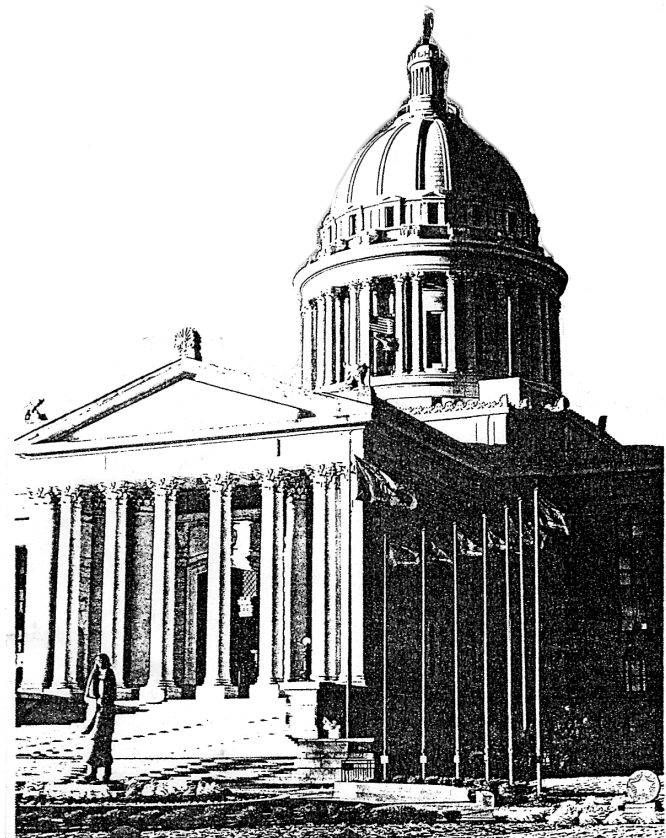
But limited funds over the past few years have prevented the Legislature from paying much attention to the commission's recommendations. As a result, some maintenance needs have gone unmet.

Moreover, on the transportation side, Oklahoma is desperate for money to spend on keeping its roads and bridges in better repair.

"We fall down greatly on maintenance of the system," says Transportation Director Gary Ridley. But Ridley's quest for a heightened focus on maintenance is dependent on getting legislative buy-in. And that just hasn't happened yet.

FINANCIAL PROCESSES PRETTY GOOD

Insofar as the state's budget office and other fiscal managers can actually control things, Oklahoma's financial processes are pretty good. Cash handling and risk management are solid, and the state has toughened up the rules for breaking into its rainy day fund.



There is a very strong ethos of on-time budgets and well-wrought financial statements. The one major weakness is in unfunded pension liabilities. These are in the \$5 billion range, and the state has done little to whittle that number down.

There's good news to report in human resources. Historically weak HR technology systems have gotten the attention they need, and the state is in its second year of implementing personnel management software.

The main personnel office has been given statutory responsibility to help produce agency workforce plans, and it is optimistic about receiving the resources to develop a statewide plan.

HARBINGER OF PROGRESS

There are other reasons to be hopeful. Officials in the state Auditor and Inspector's Office believe that last year, for the first time, the Legislature began paying some attention to the performance measures it received.

That could be a harbinger of progress in other areas. The state's finance office has been trying to promote a strategic planning process in the agencies and says they are gradually getting the idea.

But even if the Legislature starts focusing on performance, money for data-based management efforts is in short supply. The Auditor's Office, for example, after years of failing to produce performance audits, has created a new performance audit division.

Unfortunately, the office has dedicated only five staffers to the effort so far. Without budget increases from the Legislature, the office has funded those positions by shifting monies internally.

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INCARCERATION

From Page 6

for dedication of a new school in El Salvador. I wrote – and LBJ read to the world – that education is "the revolutionary music of democracy."

Johnson's early years were as a public school teacher. He knew the power of properly funded formal education.

Oklahoma's Kaiser told the Journal that he "got interested in the issues about eight years ago." Frosty and I were outraged decades earlier. But, at 64, Kaiser lacks the extra decade of life that Frosty and I cherish.

Kaiser noted that he had grown "more and more frustrated that all of the billions of dollars we were throwing at the problem of endemic poverty was having little demonstrable impact."

In my view, as one who was reared in a full-gospel church, Kaiser's story should be preached in the pulpits of every Oklahoma church and across America.

PRISON: AMERICA'S SIMPLE ANSWER TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Throwing folks in prison is a rotten idea. Un-Christian, for certain. It is the opposite of the powers of love that Christ preached. It counters the Judeo-Christian leading ethics. Prisons have become America's simple answer to complex problems.

Look at some more Economist statistics. The United States ranks way down at 28th among the world's nations on the "environmental performance index." The U.S. divorce rate is second highest among all nations. These are numbers reflecting this nation's moral health. However, America leads the world by spending 15.2% of the gross national product on physical health care compared with 10.5% spent in Iceland. [Despite greater spending, Americans have 77.9 life expectancy years compared with 81.4 years in Iceland.]

However, no statistic is more saddening than the number of American people who are in prison.

Kaiser is nipping at the problem with early childhood education.

Another problem is drug addiction. During my years as a journalist, I covered police and the courts in Sapulpa, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Dallas and Honolulu. I came to believe that causes of many crimes obviously were linked to addiction. Most hardened addicts support their illegal, thus costly, habits through crime. Perhaps some decriminalization should be considered. Is mari-

juana any worse than whisky?

ADDICTION PROPELS PRISON POPULATION

While the Economist's new booklet fails to address addiction statistically, I strongly believe that the problem of drug abuse is an overwhelming root of crime and a major force in building prison populations. Ask the wardens.

Both Troy and I often went to bat for ample funding of Oklahoma's mental health system, the chief agency that deals sensibly with treating addiction. Be assured, illegal narcotics are available in many jails and prisons. Poorly paid guards are a small challenge for insidious inmates and smugglers.

Leaders like former state Sen. Ben Brown understood the problems and led the fight. Brown's message was pointed: attack a major cause of crime by treating addiction. Moreover, turn wasted lives into productive, tax-paying citizens through education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Brown ennobled the message that cites the cost of keeping a fellow human in prison is roughly equal to the expense of sending a kid to Harvard.

THE HIGH COST OF PRISONS

Prisons not only are expensive, they are leading sites to learn how to commit more insidious crimes after an inmate is released. Penitentiaries are essential, but no nation abuses their use to the extent of the United States, as the Economist reports.

Oklahoma City voters "dumbed down" the Legislature by defeating Brown.

Moreover, the state silenced its most powerful voice and anti-addiction champion by denying this informed and devoted leader a day-by-day forum to inform the masses.

Except for The Oklahoma Observer, the state has only timid journalistic media to carry the hard-hitting facts of life; to report the misguided spending of public resources, and to expose the putrid crime and punishment attitudes so warmly embraced by Oklahoma leaders and citizens.

The real answer must come in the hearts, minds and the demands of the average Oklahoman. But, first, these voters and citizens must know the facts. Such has just been published by the world-renowned Economist magazine.

– The author lives on Monkey Island, OK

'Blue' Democrats Are Bush's Loyal Lapdogs

By Matt Renner

A tightly-knit group of self-styled moderate and conservative Democrats in the House of Representatives known as the Blue Dog Coalition supported controversial legislation granting the Bush administration expanded powers to spy on Americans.

The group was instrumental in passing legislation that was opposed by a vast majority of Democrats. According to their web site, the coalition named themselves Blue Dogs because "their moderate-to-conservative-views had been 'choked blue' by their party in the years leading up to the 1994 election."

They have had some success taking seats from Republican incumbents. According to their web site, 24 Blue Dogs won elections against Republican incumbents since 1996.

The Blue Dogs pride themselves on being a fiscally conservative group intent on balancing the national budget and paying down the almost \$9 trillion national debt.

Tim Mahoney, who became the representative for the 16th district of Florida after disgraced Republican Mark Foley dropped out of the 2006 election, recently became a member of the Blue Dogs.

BLUE DOGS ARE GOP LITE?

When he joined up, Mahoney described the coalition as a select group with an agenda. "We're hawks on national defense, we're pro-business, especially small business, and we believe in balancing the budget," Mahoney said.

According to Mahoney, he faced a thorough vetting process before being accepted into the group.

"You have to be interviewed and accepted by the group. You have to be able to demonstrate that you're ideologically supportive of being fiscally conservative. You show them speeches and statements you've made in the past," Mahoney told the *Charlotte Sun*, a local paper from his district.

The Blue Dogs have apparently informed the Democratic leadership in the House that they support the ongoing occupation of Iraq. According to Mahoney, he met with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and told her "The president should be free to maintain troops in Iraq, if the purpose is to thwart terrorism."

Mahoney's description of the Blue Dog's hawkish stance is not officially part of their platform, according to their spokesperson and their web site. The group does not issue press releases on national defense votes, although they have played an instrumental role in passing controversial bills that have been framed by the Bush Administration as legislation intended to prevent terrorism.

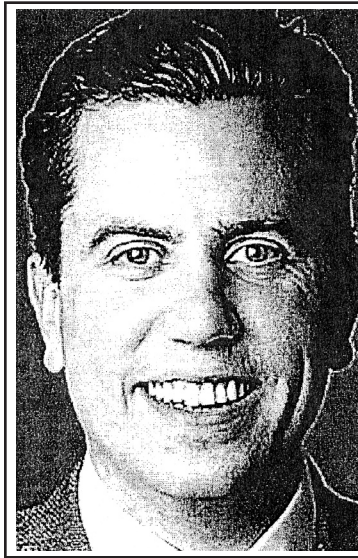
DANCING THE BUSH 'LOCKSTEP'

The Blue Dogs have provided key votes on controversial bills backed by the Bush Administration.

In September of 2006, 31 Democratic representatives voted with the Republican majority in the House to pass The Military Commissions Act. The controversial act empowered Bush to designate individuals as "enemy combatants," and deny them certain legal rights.

Twenty-three of the Democrats who supported the bill were Blue Dogs.

At 10:20 PM on Saturday, August 4, 2007, with the help of 31 Blue Dogs, the House Republicans passed the Protect America Act, a bill that altered the Foreign



Oklahoma's lone congressional Democrat, Rep. Dan Boren, left, is one of 47 members of the Blue Dog Coalition. Others are Mike Arcuri, NY; Joe Baca, CA; John Barrow, GA; Melissa Bean, IL; Marion Berry, AR; Sanford Bishop, GA; Leonard Boswell, IA; Allen Boyd, FL; Dennis Cardoza, CA; Christopher Carney, PA; Ben Chandler, KY; Jim Cooper, TN; Jim Costa, CA; Bud Cramer, AL; Lincoln Davis, TN; Joe Donnelly, IN; Brad Ellsworth, IN; Kirsten Gillibrand, NY; Gabrielle Giffords, AZ; Bart Gordon, TN; Jane Harman, CA; Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, SD; Baron Hill, IN; Tim Holden, PA; Nick Lampson, TX; Mike McIntyre, NC; Tim Mahoney, FL; Jim Marshall, GA; Jim Matheson, UT; Charles Melancon, LA; Mike Michaud, ME; Dennis Moore, KS; Patrick Murphy, PA; Collin Peterson, MN; Earl Pomeroy, ND; Mike Ross, AR; John Salazar, CO; Loretta Sanchez, CA; Adam Schiff, CA; David Scott, GA; Heath Shuler, NC; Zack Space, OH; John Tanner, TN; Gene Taylor, MS; Mike Thompson, CA; and Charles Wilson, OH.

Intelligence Surveillance Act [FISA] and weakened safeguards against domestic warrantless wiretapping.

The bill, a replica of a proposal by the Bush administration, passed with a 44-vote margin, with 227 Yeas and 183 Nays. Despite comprising 76% of the Democratic support for the bill, communications director for the Blue Dogs, Kristen Hawn, said that the Blue Dog Coalition took no official position on the bill.

PELOSI FAILED TO FLEX HER MUSCLE

Despite the fracture among Democrats, Pelosi allowed the Republican bill to come to the floor for a vote. After it passed, she went on record saying that the bill "does violence to the Constitution of the United States."

Earlier in the week, a FISA revision proposed by the Democrats as a compromise with the Bush Administration was placed on the suspension calendar by the speaker. This procedural move made the bill safe from amendments but also significantly raised the number of votes required to pass it. Because of the move, the bill required a two-thirds majority vote, a margin the Democrats were unable to achieve.

The Democratic leadership was faced with a choice: allow the President's bill to come to the floor, or defy the President's demand for action and take their summer recess without updating FISA. Pelosi's office did not return phone calls for comment.

Michelle Richardson, legislative consultant for the ACLU in Washington, DC, said that legislation left many issues unresolved and open to interpretation by the Bush Administration.

FREELY SPYING ON AMERICANS

"We don't know how information will be collected, who has access to the data or how it can be used. The next bill should put specific and explicit controls on whether and how to collect or use the U.S. phone calls and e-mails that are collected," Richardson said.

Democrats have vowed to revisit the legislation after the Congressional recess. In a letter to the chairmen of the House Judiciary and Intelligence Committees, Pelosi asked for new legislation to be crafted.

"Many provisions of this legislation are unacceptable, and, although the bill has a six month sunset clause, I do not believe the American people will wait that long before corrective action is taken."

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Don't Jump To Conclusions On Power Plant

By Paul Renfrow

I have read with interest the comments and articles in the Observer about opposing OG&E, PSO [Public Service Co. of Oklahoma] and the Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority's proposed coal-fired power plant.

My caution to the Observer's readers is to think carefully before leaping to the conclusion the plant is the wrong course of action.

These utilities do not have the luxury of being able to be single issue companies. In planning for the future they must consider the impact to the environment, cost to the consumer and reliability of the electric system and strike a balance between the three.

Focusing on only one and ignoring the other two would result in serious consequences.

The first fact is that Oklahoma's growing economy will demand new baseload generation in about the 2012 time-frame.

A baseload plant is a plant that runs the majority of the time to cover the base demand for electricity while other, less efficient plants come on line as they are needed during any particular day.

CONSERVATION WON'T BE ENOUGH

While all three of these utilities are actively involved in energy efficiency programs, the fact remains that the state will not be able to conserve its way out of the need for additional baseload generation.

While all of these utilities are leaders in renewable energy, wind power is not suitable for baseload purposes. Nuclear power is not yet an option for the time frame this power is needed in Oklahoma. Hydro power is not a realistic option in Oklahoma and other forms of energy such as solar power are not yet mature enough to consider for these needs.

That leaves natural gas and coal.

It is a fact that natural gas is a cleaner burning fuel than coal. In fact more than

60% of these utilities' generation is today gas fired.

The drawback to natural gas is its price. The price of gas tends to fluctuate greatly and it often is very high.

WINTER CRISIS ONLY TWO YEARS AGO

Don't forget that only two winters ago our state and nation was in near crisis mode figuring out how to fund public and private heating and energy assistance programs that were predicted to run out of money due to high gas prices. These programs help thousands of low-income families in Oklahoma alone. [Fortunately, the winter was mild and we dodged the bullet].

So OG&E, PSO and OMPA are partnering in a coal plant. Coal is a significantly cheaper fuel, but does come with environmental concerns. That is why these companies are not proposing just any coal plant.

They recognize the need for environmental sensitivity and are stepping forward to build the very best in proven coal-fired technology.

In addition, the physical space is being provided at the plant site for carbon capture technology that is in development.

BALANCING ENVIRONMENTAL, FINANCIAL CONCERNS

These utilities are well aware of the need to respect and protect the environment and are doing what they can to do so.

But they also recognize the need to respect the financial needs of the million and a half electric customers in the state.

While energy costs are low in Oklahoma, demand is quite high due to Oklahoma's long, hot summers and, as a result, so are electric bills.

It is a difficult balance and these companies are trying to achieve it.

I urge readers of the Observer to consider all of the facts before they decide to support or oppose this proposal.

- The author is vice president, public affairs for Oklahoma Gas & Electric

BOOKS

On Faith, Reason And Religious Diversity

By Randolph M. Feezell

LETTER TO A CHRISTIAN NATION

By Sam Harris
Alfred A. Knopf
112 pages, \$16.95

Sam Harris is mad as hell and he's not going to take it anymore. Author of the recent bestseller, *The End of Faith*, and one of a group of thinkers and writers dubbed "the new atheists," Harris, as well as biologist Richard Dawkins, philosopher Daniel Dennett, and writer and cultural critic Christopher Hitchens, is selling a lot of books, much to the dismay of many believers.

In *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Harris aggressively responds to the "eerie certainties" of what he calls "Christians in a narrow sense," in particular, The Christian Right, whose exclusivist religious views he finds both ludicrous and dangerous.

[Exclusivism: my religious beliefs are true, and if you reject them the benefits promised by my religion will be unavailable to you – or in one familiar version heaven for the believer, eternal damnation for the non-believer.]

This relatively brief missive is a rejoinder to those Christian believers who wrote to Harris in response to his previous book, thousands who feared for his soul because of the book's take-no-prisoners attack on religion and its defense of science and reason.

In many ways, his lively little book is a predictable compendium of various critical responses to a certain brand of Christianity – and religion, more generally. Yet predictability is in the eye of the beholder. Philosophers will recognize fairly standard criticisms of the Divine Command theory of morality, a straightforward presentation of the problem of evil, a clear and unsurprising defense of a secular morality [including an important point about the conflict between moral merit and acting from self-interest], and a brief account of Hume's famous criticisms of the design and cosmological arguments for the existence of God.

Many of these points are not well-known, however, to ordinary believers who have neither the time nor the motivation to dig through the relevant material. [To speak of these criticisms as "standard" does not lessen their force.]

While Harris' atheism might be new in some sense, nevertheless it falls into an extended tradition initiated in ancient Greek philosophy, fueled by the rise of science and the Enlightenment stress on individual human reason, and pointedly expressed in modern philosophy by Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and Bertrand Russell's skepticism, deftly and clearly expressed in his popular essays.

Like many before him, Harris has great fun pointing out inconsistencies occasioned by fundamentalist readings of the Bible, and he insists that the Bible is not, in fact, a "perfect guide to morality." The Bible makes morally repugnant claims – or so he argues – and does not even offer an unambiguous rejection of a practice as morally obvious and heinous as slavery. Compared to the clear central moral tenets of Jain morality, for example, the Bible is muddled.

Much of Harris' time is spent on what I would call a disconnecting project. In the minds of many, there is an essential connection between religion and morality – or person's religion and "real values." A recent issue of *Time* magazine

trumpeted "How the Democrats Got Religion," and featured statistics showing once again that atheists constitute the minority group whose members have virtually no chance of being taken seriously as presidential candidates.

I take Harris' book to be a series of reminders, one of the most important of which is that compassion isn't dependent on believing in God, nor is reference to God's will, as expressed in one's privileged holy book, an acceptable moral substitute for concern with human and animal suffering. Harris' discussion of

human papillomavirus [HPV], a cause of nearly 5,000 women's deaths each year from cervical cancer, and Christian conservatives resistance to a vaccination program for HPV that is "both safe and effective," is more than troubling.

As Harris says, "atheists are the most reviled minority in the United States," yet his own humane voice as well as his social statistics show that secular individuals, groups, and even countries [think European] are not necessarily less moral, less healthy, or less promising as the possible loci of good human lives.

Harris reminds us of the profound difference between religious beliefs and scientific beliefs, not because science and religion offer two different but equally valid ways of knowing, but because religion does not offer us

a way of knowing – period. For him, the conflict between science and religion is unavoidable. We know the natural world evolved in ways described by science; we do not know how or why the universe exists.

As our political candidates, especially Republicans, fall all over themselves to confirm their piety and question evolutionary science, it's striking that the language of faith gets so much respect. As Harris says, "Religion is the one area of our discourse where it is considered noble to pretend to be certain about things no human being could possibly be certain about." And when a believer's moral argument contains a religious premise, either implicitly or explicitly, respect for the relevant moral conclusions about homosexuality, euthanasia, stem-cell research, or abortion, becomes respect for moral arbitrariness, respect for positions not based on standard moral appeals to suffering or good or justice, but on ... faith, "nothing more than the license religious people give one another to keep believing when reasons fail."

In the end, Harris' rhetorical excesses are probably a function of how much is at issue now when it comes to the role of religion in our life. They flew planes into our buildings, don't you know. They want their religious and moral views

See CHRISTIAN Page 13

Newcomers Need To Know Okie Speak

Here are things a newcomer to Oklahoma will learn about the state and the people who inhabit it:

Armadillos sleep in the middle of the road with all four feet in the air.

There are 5,000 types of snakes and 4,998 live in Oklahoma.

There are 10,000 types of spiders. All 10,000 live in Oklahoma, plus a few no one has ever seen before.

Raccoons will test your melon crop, and let you know when they are ripe.

If it grows, it will stick you. If it crawls, it will bite you!

Nothing will kill a cedar tree.

There are valid reasons some people put razor wire around their house.

A tractor is NOT an all terrain vehicle. They do get stuck.

The wind blows at 90 mph from Oct. 2 till June 25; then it stops totally until October 2.

Once and twiced are words.

Coldbeer is one word.

Green grass DOES burn.

When you live in the country you don't have to buy a dog. City people drop them off at your front gate in the middle of the night.

The sound of coyotes howling at night only sounds good for the first few weeks.

When a buzzard sits on the fence and stares at you, it's time to see a doctor.

Fixin'-to is one word.

There ain't no such thing as "lunch." There is only breakfast, dinner and then there's supper.

Sweetened ice tea is appropriate for all meals, and you start drinking it when you are two.

"Backwards and forwards" means I know everything about you.

"Jeet?" is actually an inquiry into your dining habits.

You don't have to wear a watch because it doesn't matter what time it is. You work until you're done or it's too dark to see.

You measure distance in minutes or hours.

You can switch from "heat" to "A/C" in the same day.

Stores don't have bags. They have sacks.

You see cars with the engine running in the Wal-Mart parking lot with no one in them, no matter what time of the year.

All the festivals across the state are named after a fruit or a vegetable.

You install security lights on your house and garage, and leave both unlocked.

You carry jumper cables for your own car.

You know what "cow tipping" and "snipe hunting" are.

You only have five spices in your kitchen: Salt, Pepper, Ranch Dressing, Ketchup and Tabasco.

The local papers cover national and international news on page one but requires six pages to cover Friday night high school football.

The first day of deer season is a state holiday.

You know which leaves make good toilet paper.

You find 100 degrees a "tad" warm.

The four seasons are: Almost summer, summer, still summer and Christmas.

You know whether another Okie is from East, West, North, or South Oklahoma as soon as he opens his mouth.

Going to Wal-Mart is a favorite pasttime known as "goin' Wal-Martin" or "off to Wally world."

You describe the first cool snap [below 70F] as good chili-eatin' weather.

A carbonated soft drink isn't a soda, cola or pop ... it's a Coke, regardless of brand or flavor.

– Anonymous

Sparing Students Textbook Extortion

By Michael Granof

By now, entering college students and their parents have been warned: textbooks are outrageously expensive. Few textbooks for semester-long courses retail for less than \$120, and those for science and math courses typically approach \$180. Contrast this with the \$20 to \$30 cost of most hardcover best sellers and other trade books.

Perhaps these students and their parents can take comfort in knowing that the federal government empathizes with them, and in an attempt to ease their pain Congress asked its Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance to suggest a cure for the problem. Unfortunately, though, the committee has proposed a remedy that would only worsen the problem.

The committee's report, released in May, mainly proposes strengthening the market for used textbooks by encouraging college bookstores to guarantee that they will buy back textbooks, establishing online book swaps among students and urging faculty to avoid switching textbooks from one semester to the next. The fatal flaw in that proposal [and similar ones made by many state Legislatures] is that used books are the cause of, not the cure for, high textbook prices.

Yet there is a way to lighten the load for students in their budgets, if not their backpacks. With small modifications to the institutional arrangements between universities, publishers and students, textbook costs could be reduced – and these changes could be made without government intervention.

COSTS OF EFFICIENT USED BOOK SYSTEM

Today the used-book market is exceedingly well organized and efficient. Campus bookstores buy back not only the books that will be used at their university the next semester but also those that will not. Those that are no longer on their lists of required books they resell to national wholesalers, which in turn sell them to college bookstores on campuses where they will be required. This means that even if a text is being adopted for the first time at a particular college, there is almost certain to be an ample supply of used copies.

As a result, publishers have the chance to sell a book to only one of the multiple students who eventually use it. Hence, publishers must cover their costs and make their profit in the first semester their books are sold – before used copies swamp the market. That's why the prices are so high.

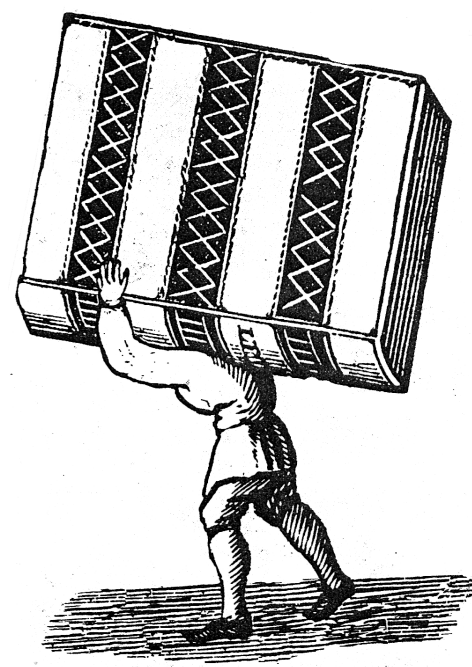
As might be expected, publishers do what they can to undermine the used-book market, principally by coming out with new editions every three or four years. To be sure, in rapidly changing fields like biology and physics, the new editions may be academically defensible. But in areas like algebra and calculus, they are nothing more than a transparent attempt to ensure premature textbook obsolescence. Publishers also try to discourage students from buying used books by bundling the text with extra materials like workbooks and CDs that are not reusable and therefore cannot be passed from one student to another.

The system could be much improved if, first of all, colleges and publishers would acknowledge that textbooks are more akin to computer software than to trade books. A textbook's value, like that of a software program, is not in its physical form, but rather in its intellectual content. Therefore, just as software companies typically "site license" to colleges, so should textbook publishers.

HOW SYSTEM CAN BE TWEAKED

Here's how it would work: A teacher would pick a textbook, and the college would pay a negotiated fee to the publisher based on the number of students enrolled in the class. If there were 50 students in the class, for example, the fee might be \$15 per student, or \$750 for the semester. If the text were used for 10 semesters, the publisher would ultimately receive a total of \$150 [\$15 x 10] for each student enrolled in the course, or as much as \$7,500.

In other words, the publisher would have a stream of revenue for as long as the text was in use. Presumably, the university would pass on this fee to the stu-



OU Offers Alternatives To Students

The University of Oklahoma is taking steps to help students with the high cost of textbooks. Starting this fall, a selected collection of required textbooks will be available free of charge to students in Bizzell Memorial Library on reserve.

More than 800 textbooks for about 250 courses were purchased, primarily for general education courses with the highest enrollments, as well as courses that have comparatively high-cost textbooks.

The textbook library is a result of a \$200,000 fund established by OU President David Boren and announced at the June meeting of the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents. It followed recommendations from Boren's Presidential Textbook Taskforce and the Provost's Textbook Taskforce.

Students may view a regularly updated listing of textbooks available online at <http://libraries.ou.edu/textbooks>. The textbooks are available for two-hour, in-library use and can be renewed for additional two-hour increments.

dents, just as it does the cost of laboratory supplies and computer software. But the students would pay much less than the \$900 a semester they now typically pay for textbooks.

Once the university had paid the license fee, each student would have the option of using the text in electronic format or paying more to purchase a hard copy through the usual channels. The publisher could set the price of hard copies low enough to cover only its production and distribution costs plus a small profit, because it would be covering most of its costs and making most of its profit by way of the license fees. The hard copies could then be resold to other students or back to the bookstore, but that would be of little concern to the publisher.

NO AFFECT ON HOW COURSES TAUGHT

A further benefit of this approach is that it would not affect the way courses are taught. The same cannot be said for other recommendations from the congressional committee and from state legislatures, like placing teaching materials on electronic reserve, urging faculty to adopt cheaper "no frills" textbooks and assigning mainly electronic textbooks. While each of these suggestions may have merit, they force faculty to weigh students' academic interests against their fiscal concerns, and encourage them to rely less on new textbooks.

Neither colleges nor publishers are known for their cutting-edge innovations. But if they could slightly change the way they do business, they would make a substantial dent in the cost of higher education and provide a real benefit to students and their parents.

– The author is a professor of accounting at the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, a textbook author, and chairman of the university's Co-op Bookstore.

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Union Minorities Seek Bargaining

Seven labor unions asked the National Labor Relations Board to order employers to bargain with unions, even when the unions represent only a minority of employees.

This would be a sharp departure from current practices, in which employers are required to bargain with a union only after it shows that a majority of employees at a workplace support it.

The unions hope that such a change will make it easier to unionize workers. Today, 7.4% of private-sector workers belong to unions, less than a fourth of the rate in the 1950s.

The unions involved in the bid, including the United Steelworkers and the United Auto Workers, say the labor board should return to a largely forgotten practice, prevalent in the 1930s, in which companies often bargained with unions representing only a minority of workers who had joined them.

"This is what the text of the National Labor Relations Act requires, and there are no decisions to the contrary," said Charles J. Morris, emeritus professor of labor law at Southern Methodist University and champion of this notion.

Union officials acknowledged that the labor board, currently dominated by appointees of President Bush, would probably not adopt a rule so favorable to unions.

Union officials said they were petitioning now in the hope that there will be a Democratic president someday who will appoint a board that will look favorably

upon their argument.

The unions' legal papers note that the steelworkers and auto workers were at first minority, members-only unions at several companies and then obtained good contracts that helped persuade 180,000 other workers to organize as part of majority-backed unions.

Twenty-five law professors wrote to the labor board in support of the unions' interpretation of the statute, saying that minority, members-only unions can provide "a useful and often-needed steppingstone to majority-based" unions.

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gay and questioning teens

Overweight Kids Are Facing Stigma

By John Christian

Overweight children are stigmatized by their peers as early as age three and even face bias from parents and teachers, giving them a quality of life comparable to people with cancer.

A new report says youngsters who report teasing, rejection, bullying and other types of abuse because of their weight are two to three times more likely to report suicidal thoughts as well as to suffer from other health issues such as high blood pressure and eating disorders.

"The stigmatization directed at obese children by their peers, parents, educators and others is pervasive and often unrelenting," researchers with Yale University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa wrote in the July issue of Psychological Bulletin.

The paper was based on a review of all research on youth weight bias over the past 40 years, said lead author Rebecca M. Puhl of Yale's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

WORLDWIDE EPIDEMIC OF CHILD OBESITY

It comes amid a growing worldwide epidemic of child obesity. By 2010, almost 50% of children in North America and 38% of children in the European Union will be overweight, the researchers said.

While programs to prevent childhood obesity are growing, more efforts are needed to protect overweight children from abuse, Puhl said.

"The quality of life for kids who are obese is comparable to the quality of life of kids who have cancer," Puhl said, citing one study. "These kids are facing stigma from everywhere they look in society, whether it's media, school or at home."

Even with a growing percentage of overweight people, the stigma shows no signs of subsiding, according to Puhl. She said television and other media continue to reinforce negative stereotypes.

THIS BIAS IS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE

"This is a form of bias that is very socially acceptable," Puhl said. "It is rarely challenged; it's often ignored."

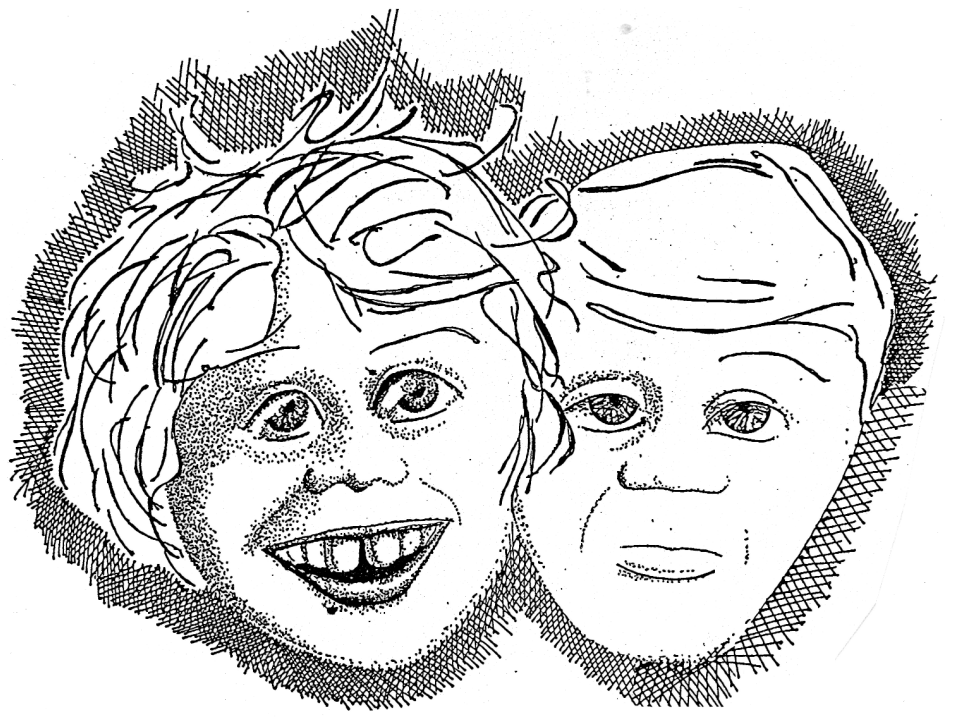
The stigmatization of overweight children has been documented for decades. When children were asked to rank photos of children as friends in one study, the overweight child was ranked last.

Children as young as three are more likely to consider overweight peers to be mean, stupid, ugly and sloppy.

A growing body of research shows that parents and educators are also biased against heavy children. In a 1999 study of 115 middle and high school teachers, 20% said they believed obese people are untidy, less likely to succeed and more emotional.

PARENTS OFTEN STIGMATIZE THEIR CHILDREN

"Perhaps the most surprising source of weight stigma toward youths is parents," the report says.



Several studies showed that overweight girls got less college financial support from their parents than average weight girls. Other studies showed teasing by parents was common.

"It is possible that parents may take out their frustration, anger and guilt on their overweight child by adopting stigmatizing attitudes and behavior, such as making critical and negative comments toward their child," the authors wrote, suggesting further research is needed.

A study in 2003 found that obese children had much lower quality of life scores on issues such as health, emotional and social well-being, and school functioning.

"An alarming finding of this research was that obese children had [quality of life] scores comparable with those of children with cancer," the researchers reported.

5,000 MIDDLE SCHOOLERS PART OF RESEARCH

Sylvia Rimm, author of "Rescuing the Emotional Lives of Overweight Children," said her surveys of more than 5,000 middle school children reached similar conclusions.

"The overweight children felt less intelligent," Rimm said. "They felt less popular. They struggled from early on. They feel they are a different species."

Parents should emphasize a child's strengths, she said, and teachers should pair up students for activities instead of letting children pick their partners.

The Yale-Hawaii research report recommends more research to determine whether negative stereotypes lead to discriminatory behavior, citing evidence that overweight adults face discrimination. It also calls for studying ways to reduce stigma and negative attitudes toward overweight children.

"Weight-based discrimination is as important a problem as racial discrimination or discrimination against children with physical disabilities," the report concludes. "Remedying it needs to be taken equally seriously."

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Americans Dance With Words Of Fear

By Robert C. Koehler

I knew there was a war on against cancer and, oh yeah, drugs, illiteracy, poverty, crime and, of course, terror, and that many arenas – sports, religion, business and politics, to name a few – are often portrayed as war without the body bags.

I was still surprised to read recently in the New York Times that we've opened up a fat front: "It is a scene being repeated across the country as schools deploy the blood-pumping video game Dance Dance Revolution as the latest weapon," the Gray Lady informed us, "in the nation's battle against the epidemic of childhood obesity."

Enough already! If I were an overweight kid, would I want Braveheart in my face? My impatience here reaches into the language center of the American brain, or at least the media brain.

TIME TO RETHINK OUR LANGUAGE

When chubby nine-year-olds are inspiring the language of Guadalcanal and 9/11, maybe as a nation it's time to rethink our rhetorical default settings.

Maybe it's time to stop regarding every challenge, danger, obstacle, mystery and fear we encounter as a military operation, to be won or lost. We should at least be aware we have a choice in the matter.

Metaphors are the very essence of that light bulb [metaphor] we think of as understanding. When it goes off, it means – boing-gg! – we've linked the unknown with the known, created order out of the tumult of love or the daily commute or those blood-test results.

Metaphors do not equal reality, but good ones illuminate it. The wrong metaphor about what's going on, however, makes us stupid.

GEORGE BUSH FEASTS ON FEAR

Witness George Bush's war on terror, a flailing spasm of high-tech counter-terror that seems as rational as ... oh, calling for an air strike to take out obesity.

Ever since 9/11, I've been driven by an urgency to understand why we as a nation accepted Bush's war of revenge so enthusiastically and felt so little empathy toward the innocent, sitting-duck populations we were about to carpet bomb.

A big part of the reason, I believe, is that the military response, which means defining an enemy and immediately suspending all human feelings toward it, is embedded in our language.

I also believe such language has outlived its usefulness in almost every way it's applied and that a new, more complex way of thinking has begun to emerge.

MILITARIZING CANCER AND RELIGION

Consider: A 2005 University of Florida study on doctor-patient communication, published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, concluded that, "Well-meaning doctors seeking to explain treatment to cancer patients by comparing it to an all-out war might be wise to skip the military metaphors."

"The life-is-a-journey comparison is a quieter metaphor and has the depth, richness and seriousness to apply to the cancer experience," said Dr. Gary M. Reisfield, one of the researchers.

"The road may not be as long as one hoped, and important destinations may be bypassed, but there's no winning, losing or failing."

Or how about the militarization of religion? Rev. Peter Paulsen, writing at medialit.org, noted: "We no longer accept racist references in speech, much less in worship ... But many Western – and some Eastern – religions still describe our relationship to God in military terms."

LOOK AT THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION

"We talk of 'battling' the devil, and 'conquering' sin. We loudly sing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' or 'Lord, God of Hosts, Mighty in Battle.'

"Despite the controversy that changing this language might provoke," he wrote, "all people of faith need to reexamine whether the 'peace that passes all understanding' can be effectively communicated – in today's nuclear age – by traditional metaphors of war."

David C. Smith, in an essay called "De-Militarizing Language" published at peacemagazine.org, asked: "Suppose instead of thinking about argument in terms of war, we were to think of argument as a pleasing, graceful dance. How would such a metaphor cause us to conceptualize argument in a different way?"

Those who can't or won't change their thinking will eye these alternatives as further intrusions of political correctness on their happiness: the smiley-face suppression of natural aggression so that everyone gets along in false harmony. I say imagine dancing with what we fear instead of trying to kill it.

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Beyond The Grave

Falwell's Never-Ending Clinton Obsession

By Don Wilkey

In 1994 Jerry Falwell was criticized for using his Old Time Gospel Hour to hawk a video called "The Clinton Chronicles."

The "documentary" was laced with outrageous insinuations claiming Bill Clinton was guilty of everything imaginable in his history. Just about the only thing left out in accusations was the killing of O.J.'s wife.

The late Falwell held no punches in his opinions about President Clinton claiming that Baptist Clinton was "the most radical and controversial president in our nation's history."

In contrast, the late preacher often claimed that the greatest President was Ronald Reagan.

Falwell found few if any shortcomings with President Reagan, even though Reagan wasn't that much into church attendance in his life.

WITH NEWT, IT'S FORGIVE AND FORGET

Even GOP friend Newt Gingrich is excused for the affair he had while wanting to lead the charge to impeach Clinton. Newt found forgiveness from Falwell who invited Gingrich to speak at a Liberty U. graduation ceremony.

Politics appears to carry more weight than theology since Liberty University has had a chummy relationship with cult leader Rev. Moon. Jerry often endorsed the Moon-owned Washington newspaper as an excellent source of news. He in turn once claimed the New York Times was trying to intimidate small town pastors into not speaking their minds.

Falwell's newspaper, National Liberty Journal, is mailed to just about every church in the nation free of charge. The paper is overflowing with praise for President Bush and allies claiming a national conspiracy exists against true conservatives.

A typical issue is represented by the one with a full-page ad promoting the book by Michael Kellet claiming to uncover the truth about the death of Vince Foster. The ad asks the question to be dealt with in the book, "Was Hillary involved?"

BILL CLINTON IN BED WITH COMMIES

Another issue of the Journal has editor J.M. Smith's review of the book Red Dragon Rising. The book claims to document the relationship between Bill Clinton and communists.

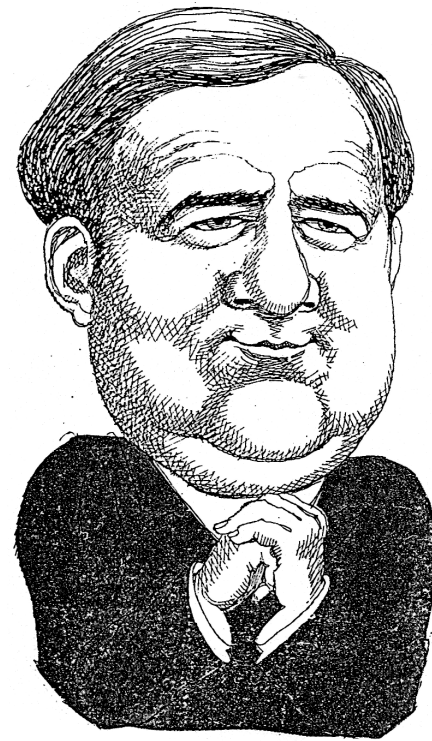
The article states that the legacy of Billy Clinton will be his betrayal of the sacred trust of the American people by harming the national security of the nation.

Another issue offers several other options on the Clinton presidency. The Secret Life of Bill Clinton is supposed to expose his crimes, while book Boy Clinton has "facts uncovered never revealed before."

These publications come from the Conservative Book Club Jerry often found quite resourceful.

In November 1996 the Journal had a full-page ad by author George Carpozi Jr. peddling his book, Clinton Confidential. You can pretty well guess what is in that volume.

According to the ad the book is "funny, it's chilling, and it's loaded."



The January 1998 issue outdid itself in allegations.

BOB BARR CASTS STONES AT CLINTON

Republican Bob Barr is highlighted in his attempt to get Clinton. Barr himself had multiple marriages and alleged scandals not to mention a link to white supremacy groups in his home state.

On the same page the death of former Secretary Ron Brown is suggested as a possible political assassination by the Clinton group.

Conservative columnist Cal Thomas was allowed to write a scathing article against Billy Graham. You can bet the only way anything negative about Graham gets into the paper is if Billy said something supportive of the Clintons.

Thomas implied Graham suffered from Parkinson's disease which caused him to be forgiving of Bill Clinton's moral lapse in the White House. On the same page arch-conservative Armstrong Williams suggested Americans care about character.

Falwell's "non-partisan" paper carried one article during the Clinton era entitled "Why Congress Must Impeach Bill Clinton." Believe it or not this article came out before anyone ever heard of Monica Lewinski.

CLINTONS THREATENED THE NATION

To Falwell and company, the Clintons had already engaged in actions that threatened the nation. Later on Falwell would compare the family to evil itself claiming they motivated his followers to vote for anyone but them in an election.

The facts, according to Falwell's paper, were that Ronald Reagan built up the nation's defense while they deteriorated under the Clinton administration.

Controversial columnist Ann Coulter, who was recently made famous for suggesting a terrorist needs to take out John Edwards, has a book out called High Crimes and Misdemeanors. Regarding the Clinton years the Liberty Journal review of the book claims, "The list of scandals and cover-ups goes on."

The December 1996 publication outdid itself in appealing to the followers of the Moral Majority. Page eight of the magazine was loaded with partisan insinuations against the Clinton legacy under the title, "Clinton Controversies." One

See FALWELL Page 14

CHRISTIAN

From Page 10

embodied in our social and political life. [Our theocrats – or theirs?] They have killed each other in Palestine, the Balkans, Northern Island, Kashmir, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Sri Lanka, the Phillipines, Iran and Iraq, and the Caucasus.

As Harris says: "That so much of this suffering can be directly attributed to religion – to religious hatred, religious wars, religious taboos, and religious diversions of scarce resources – is what makes honest criticism of religious faith a moral and intellectual necessity." No wonder he's angry.

For many readers of this journal, this is an important little book to examine. I suspect that few will be converted to Harris' atheism, nor need they be. Harris sometimes overstates the case and he fails to make some important distinctions, among varieties of religion especially. He raises important issues in provocative ways, but he ignores significant resources for reflection.

There are lively debates in contemporary philosophy of religion about contrasting approaches to religious beliefs: exclusivism, inclusivism, and religious pluralism.

Likewise, Harris seems unaware of the sophistication and complexity of apologetic analytic philosophy of religion during the last 20 or 30 years in the United States and England. These are very difficult questions indeed – and much less obvious than Harris or the fundamentalist seems to think, although his book reminds us of these difficulties, especially if we disagree with him.

Harris' solution is to keep secularization moving; his tentative optimism is occasioned by the growing secularism of Europe. Why can't that happen here? The Islamic and Christian fundamentalists, of course, as well as various Christian intellectuals, see the solution in the opposite direction.

Harris believes that the respectful and tolerant attitudes of liberal and moder-

ate Christians play into the hands of exclusivist intolerance and dogmatism. My own view, unlike exclusivist theists or missionary atheists like Harris, is that the world is religiously ambiguous. We don't really know who is right, naturalists or theists, theists or pantheists, this version or that version of theism.

None of the adherents of such views need necessarily violate the canons of rationality – although many in fact do, but we would be better off by exercising our metaphysical humility and moral seriousness in ways described long ago by the practical agnosticism of Siddhartha Gautama, the enlightened one.

I suspect that if some form of theism is true and an infinite person does exist, he is not the petty and vindictive creature described by so many theists, nor does he have a "restless appetite for applause," in Hume's memorable phrase. My view is that he must appreciate our epistemic bewilderment and even look kindly upon those who choose to use their reason as best they can, as Thomas Jefferson asserted long ago.

Insofar as the vast majority of people simply take over the religious beliefs they have been taught, it's not clear why a wise and benevolent infinite person would choose to reward those who lucked into the truth and would punish eternally those unfortunate schmucks who had the Koran, the Dhammapada, or the Bhagavad Gita featured in their home rather than the Bible.

Perhaps the solution involves the recognition that having true beliefs about God, in an important sense, doesn't ultimately matter. We would be better off recognizing that the good human life is not dependent upon exclusivist sectarian beliefs, and it is folly to perpetuate the denial of religious diversity and religious ambiguity by simply insisting that our children have the proper "faith."

– The author, raised in northwestern Oklahoma, is a philosophy professor at Creighton University and lives in Elkhorn, NE

A Ray Of Hope In High Court Ruling

By Jonathan Kozol

The Supreme Court ruling on school integration came as a blow to those who have been watching the gradual dismantling of *Brown v. Board of Education* with despair.

There is, however, some cause for hope. In his concurrence, Justice Anthony Kennedy opened up a new avenue for educational justice by contending that other methods of achieving integration – like revising school attendance zones – are constitutionally permissible so long as they do not sort and label individual children by race.

Congress has an opportunity to take advantage of the opening created by Justice Kennedy later this year when it reauthorizes the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The law gives children the right to transfer from a low-performing school to a high-performing school if the low-performing school has failed to demonstrate adequate improvement two years after being warned of its shortcomings

UP UNTIL NOW TRANSFERS A BUST

Unfortunately, the transfer provision has until now been a bust. Less than 3% of eligible children have been able to transfer, in part because of the scarcity of space in high-performing schools within most urban districts.

Although the law does not prohibit transfers between urban and suburban schools, it offers no inducements to the states to make this possible.

Democrats in the Senate should therefore introduce an amendment to authorize and make easier cross-district transfers – not on a specifically race-conscious basis, but solely to fulfill the professed intention of the law.

There is obvious urgency to this. At present, black children are more segregated in their public schools than at any time since 1968.

PARENTS SUPPORT CROSS-DISTRICT TRANSFERS

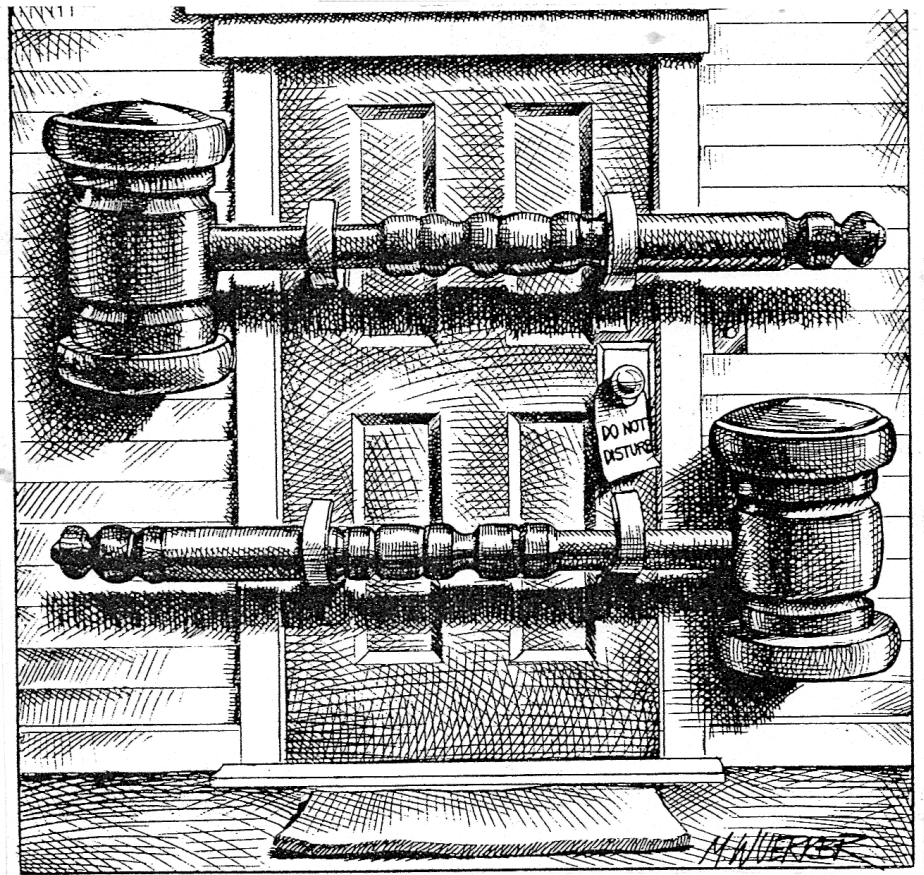
In the inner-city schools I visit, minority children typically represent 95% to 99% of class enrollment. Not surprisingly, minority parents overwhelmingly support cross-district transfers.

In the Boston area, for instance, 16,000 children – nearly one-third of all minority children in the city's schools – are on the waiting list to transfer. [It is worth noting that of the children who participate in the Boston transfer program, 95% graduate from high school and nearly 40% go on to higher education.]

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, whose Education Committee will lead the way in re-authorizing the education law, should develop an amendment to promote cross-district transfers. The amendment should include the following provisions:

SIX PROPOSALS TO INSURE GOOD EDUCATION

First, states should be required to ease transfers across district lines for children now in chronically low performing schools.



Second, schools and districts must not be permitted to reject these students so long as they have space available in existing classrooms, which most suburban districts do.

Third, states must pay the added costs incurred by the receiving districts; they must not, however, compel hard-pressed urban schools to reimburse their wealthier suburban counterparts.

Fourth, states must pay for transportation.

Fifth, in order to ease the burden on states, Congress should create a federal fund to be used to underwrite some of the costs of complying with the law.

Sixth, Congress should enact specific fiscal penalties for states that drag their heels or defy the terms of this amendment altogether.

It would take considerable courage for Sen. Kennedy, who co-sponsored the unsuccessful transfer provision in its present form, to support this proposition.

If he did, however, he could deal a mighty blow to resurgent racial concentration – without introducing racial terminology into the debate.

For this opportunity, one that was perhaps bestowed unintentionally, we have Justice Anthony Kennedy to thank.

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FALWELL

From Page 13

item was the article about the death of Vince Foster. Across the page was a photo of Ron Brown claiming to have new evidence about the plane accident. And of course the page had a picture of Paula Jones with an article about her affair with President Clinton.

DON'T EXPECT TO READ ABOUT GOP SCANDALS

Woven into the page was the story of Clinton's former secretary of agriculture resigning in a cloud of conspiracy. One will note seldom is anything ever mentioned in the paper about GOP scandals. Don't expect to read much about the resignations of Karl Rove or Alberto Gonzales in the *Journal*. If anything you can expect to read they were forced out by liberal conspiracies.

Mixed in with a photo of Larry Flynt apologizing to Falwell is an article about the death of William Colby, a former CIA director. In page 6 there is a hint that [of course] Bill Clinton is involved.

If this isn't enough to stir your anti-Democratic Party sentiments, you can buy the book *Bitter Legacy*, advertised in the magazine. In this literary gem you can find out about the Clinton's role in 9/11!

It would not come as great shock to the reader that there was in Falwell no grand affection for the candidacy of Hillary Clinton. If anything, the anti-Hillary bashing is more harsh in the paper than what was said about her husband. A full-page ad hawks the book by trooper Larry Patterson. The trooper claims to expose secrets about why Vince Foster really died. The book claims Hillary had a "steamy relationship" with the former legal aid to the White House.

'REVENGE OF THE MOSQUITOES'

A summation of the conspiracy theories Jerry held about the Clinton Presidency can be found in the full-page ad that begins with the bold title, "The Revenge of the Mosquitoes."

According to this ad allegations against the Clintons didn't stick but his administration was the "Most corrupt presidency in American history..."

November 1999 had a similar ad about a book by trooper Patterson.

Clinton family bashing went to even greater heights and bordered on hatred. When the war with Iraq made popular the deck of cards with significant enemies to be taken out in Iraq, the *Journal* jumped in on the frenzy. A deck of cards was advertised listing the most dangerous liberals in the nation. The ace of spades was occupied by Hillary who was called the "most dangerous liberal in Ameri-

ca."

FALWELL LONG OBSESSED WITH HILLARY

Way before Hillary announced her plans to run for President, Falwell was publishing reports that there was a secret plan all along for her to run. Jerry felt it was up to him and his organization to publish the truth so that the world would know that Hillary was a person suspected of murder and cover up. But as the paper states in the headlines, "Dead Men Tell No Tales."

As Mrs. Clinton grew in popularity it seemed as if the Falwell publishing media ratcheted up the accusations.

Full-page ads offered free books to reveal the secret agenda that Hillary was supposed to hold. Edward Klein's book was pushed with the headlines, "What she knew, when she knew it, and how far she'll go to become President."

Bob Allen of *Ethicsdaily.com* noted that Falwell boasted his followers feared Hillary more than they did the devil. Responding to the proposed candidacy of Bill Clinton's wife, Falwell boasted, "Because nothing will energize my constituency like Hillary Clinton. If Lucifer ran, he wouldn't." Jerry voiced to a room filled with laughter from his followers.

In an audience I was in, Falwell once boasted that he raised over \$12 million a year to keep his enterprises functioning. With that kind of revenue and influence he no doubt will have an impact on the upcoming elections in the nation, even though he no longer lives.

THOUSANDS OF PASTORS RECEIVE IT

The newspaper is mailed out by the thousands unsolicited and has the potential to influence the nation's ministers to read without discretion the paper. His son appears to keep the ball rolling in the direction Jerry wanted taking over the church and leadership of the organizations. Some have suggested he is even more to the right that his father.

A recent *Liberty Journal* highlighted huge headlines with the statement, "Hillary Just Can't Stop Laughing..." The next sentence asks, "Why is Hillary Clinton laughing at you?" She is laughing, Falwell implies, partly because she has funded art that shows a dung-covered Madonna.

What impact this tax exempt "Christian ministry" will have on the nation's elections will be hard to gauge. No doubt Hillary won't be laughing about this.

– The author is pastor of First Baptist Church of Onalaska, TX

Bush's Economy: Win One For The Flipper

By Sheila Samples

Sometimes I'm amazed at how much I know about the financial markets and the economy. I don't understand any of it, but I know a lot of stuff, thanks to my friend and mentor, Richard Walrath, who's been to the market more than once.

He says when George Bush brags that the economy is booming, he's probably right. The economy is exploding with a big boom, and Walrath says now we are engaged in a great battle to see how long this country can endure.

The Fed just poured a bunch of money into the market, which was news to me, but Walrath said the Fed has been manipulating the market for years, especially during the Bush years.

"There was great fear the United States was going to follow Japan into a period of deflation and recession - maybe even a depression," Walrath said. "Interest rates were cut close to zero while hundreds of billions of dollars were added to the national debt through tax-cuts for the rich and 'Big Bidness.' And it gets worse just at the time the national debt limit has to be raised again."

With things as bad as they are, Walrath says it's going to be interesting to see how this crisis is handled. Congress may have to pass legislation to raise the national debt. But it makes more sense to me that Bush could decide to handle the whole thing like he does everything else to avoid partisan jawboning or oversight - just dash off an Executive Order.

But the national debt is just one of many problems battering our economy. Walrath points out a major problem is "all those margin accounts out there with people getting calls to come up with some real money because their stock is down. As you might expect, this led to speculation in housing - let's flip it - and millions of people who couldn't afford to pay their rent bought houses."

Wait a minute ... Let's flip it? What does that mean? Nothing comes to mind - OK, one thing does - but Walrath never takes such a cavalier attitude about economics.

Let's flip it, Walrath says, is when "you buy the house with no intention of ever living in it. You add a kitchen, spruce up a bathroom, and 'flip' it, or put it back on the market, hoping to make a profit."

This goes on all the time, Walrath says, but there were more flippers than buyers this time around because it cost almost nothing to own a house while you were waiting to sell it. That's sub-prime credit. You could buy a house with no money down, no income, no job, no assets.

Of course! Now I understand. If you buy a house with no money down, you have little or nothing invested. Just walk away. Let the banks worry about selling them.

But to whom will banks sell them? What are the banks going to do? "That's why houses for sale are now piling up all over the country," Walrath said. "It's a terrible situation."

Donald Trump begs to differ. When you're in a hole, keep digging as hard and as fast as you can. Trump's advice, according to Walrath is to "just go back and make another deal with whoever holds the mortgage. Trump says you'll get a better deal this time than the one you had before. Don't walk away from it - go make another deal. The last thing the bank wants is your house. What are they going to do with it? They can't find anybody to buy it."

So, who's flipping whom in this credit seizure?

According to a recent, unsigned editorial in the Wall Street Journal, the root cause of this credit correction was the Federal Reserve's willingness to keep money too easy for too long.

The Journal warns an "emergency rate cut, as some in the market seem to be anticipating or hoping for, carries the risk of introducing even greater moral hazard into the financial system."

We can't have immorality in our financial system, now can we? Oh, the hor-



ror!

While chiding Democrats such as Sen. Hillary Clinton for proposing a \$1 billion federal bailout fund for homeowners at risk of default and foreclosure, the Journal goes on to channel Barbara Bush's flash of morality when speaking of homeless Katrina victims. "No one wants to see someone lose his home to foreclosure. But many of those most at risk bought their homes with little or no money down, and so have very little at stake economically. Bringing in the feds to bail them out would send precisely the wrong message - that risky or overly aggressive borrowing will be rewarded by the government rather than punished in the marketplace. To the extent that bad loans were made, the market needs to clear, not be propped up by federal-aid programs."

Unfortunately, despite what the Journal and the endlessly bleating "Money Heads" on TV would have you believe millions of Americans are in deep trouble. CNBC's Jim Cramer "flipped out" in a torrent of truth about the current economic situation.

Walrath agrees, and says if we continue in the direction we're headed, Bush's "boom" will make the savings and loan bailout look like a Girl Scout cookie sale.

According to Walrath, there are four sets of losers in this housing meltdown:

- Those caught with the homes they bought for flipping purposes are not going to be able to find buyers. They are going to lose whatever they have invested, plus whatever mortgage payments they make. It may be cheaper for them just to walk away.
- Those who own homes will see the value of their houses go down because of the current oversupply due to overbuilding when interest rates were lower and people were buying homes with little or nothing down with the idea of flipping the houses as soon as possible.
- Those who bought homes with variable-rate mortgages are having trouble making payments because those payments keep going up, and there's nothing they can do about it. Many did not even realize they had such a mortgage. Millions are going to lose their homes.
- And then, there's the murky many - the banks and the hedge funds which ended up with mortgages used as collateral for junk bonds, which ended up as holdings by French and German and English banks, not to mention those in this country.

"This is the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built, and we ain't seen nothing yet," Walrath says.

"When it comes to saving the rich from losing money, no expense will be spared. Actually," Walrath mused, "the economy is good - if you're rich. For the rest of us, there's not much to write home about."

- The author is an Oklahoma writer and a former civilian U.S. Army Public Information Officer. She is a regular contributor for a variety of Internet sites. Contact her at rsamples@sirinet.net

Presidency Being Outsourced To India

Congress has announced that the Office of President of the United States of America will be outsourced to India on Oct. 1, 2007.

The move is being made in order to save the President's \$500,000 yearly salary, and also a record \$521 billion war deficit expenditure and related overhead that the office has incurred during the last five years.

"We believe this is a wise financial move. The cost savings are huge," stated Congressman Thomas Reynolds, R-WA. "We cannot remain competitive on the world stage with the current level of cash outlay."

Bush was informed by e-mail of his termination.

Preparations for the job move have been underway for some time.

Gurvinder Singh of Indus Teleservices, Mumbai, India, will assume the office of President. Singh was born in the U.S. while his Indian parents were vacationing at Niagara Falls, NY, thus making him eligible for the position. He will receive a salary of \$320 [USD] a month, but no health coverage or other benefits.

It is believed that Singh will be able to handle his job responsibilities without a support staff. Due to the time difference between the U.S. and India, he will be working primarily at night, when few offices of the U.S. government will be open.

"Working nights will allow me to keep my day job at the Dell Computer call center," stated Singh in an exclusive interview. "I am excited about this position. I always hoped I would be President."

A congressional spokesperson noted that while Singh may not be fully aware of all the issues involved in the office of President, this should not be a problem as President Bush had never been familiar with the issues, either.

Singh will rely upon a script tree that will enable him to respond effectively to most topics of concern. Using these canned responses, he can address common concerns without having to understand the underlying issues.

"We know these scripting tools work," stated the spokesperson. "President Bush has used them successfully for years, with the result that some people actually thought he knew what he was talking about."

Bush will receive health coverage, expenses, and salary until his final day of employment. Following a two-week waiting period, he will be eligible for \$140 a week unemployment for 13 weeks.

Unfortunately he will not be eligible for Medicaid, as his unemployment benefits will exceed the allowed limit.

Bush has been provided with the outplacement services of Manpower Inc. to help him write a resume and prepare for his upcoming job transition.

According to Manpower, Bush may have difficulties in securing a new position due to a lack of any successful work experience. A greeter position at Wal-Mart was suggested due to Bush's extensive experience at shaking hands, as well as his special smile.

Satire Press

Public Defenders Do Better On Salary

By Adam Lipark

Some poor people accused of federal crimes are represented by full-time federal public defenders who earn salaries, others by court-appointed lawyers who bill by the hour.

A new study from an economist at Harvard says there is a surprisingly wide gap in how well the two groups perform.

Both kinds of lawyers are paid by the government, and they were long thought to perform about equally. But the study concludes that lawyers paid by the hour are less qualified and let cases drag on and achieve worse results for their clients, including sentences that average eight months longer.

Appointed lawyers also cost taxpayers \$61 million a year more than salaried public defenders would have cost.

MANY POSSIBLE REASONS

There are many possible reasons for the differences in performance.

Salaried public defenders generally handle more cases and have more interactions with prosecutors, so they may have a better sense of what they can negotiate for their clients.

Salaried lawyers also tend to have superior credentials and more legal experience, the study found.

The study will add a new layer to the debate over the nation's indigent defense systems. In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Gideon v. Wainwright* that poor people accused of serious crimes were entitled to legal representation paid for by the government.

The federal system handles about 5% of all criminal prosecutions and is relatively well financed. The implications of the new study for the states may therefore be limited.

A COMBINATION IN HALF THE STATES

More than half the states [including Oklahoma] use a combination of public defenders and appointed lawyers, and most indigent defendants are not represented by staff public defenders at the trial level.

In the federal courts, roughly three-quarters of all defendants rely on lawyers paid for by the government, about evenly divided between salaried public defenders and appointed lawyers paid by the hour. Most of the rest hire their own lawyers, with about 2% representing themselves.

Before the new study, the debate over how best to provide poor defendants with adequate representation had largely concerned whether lawyers for indigent defendants were paid enough to ensure a fair fight with prosecutors.

The debate did not much consider how the lawyers were paid, and whether that made a difference.

The new study looked at federal prosecutions from 1997 to 2001. It was performed by Radha Lyengar, a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard, and presented as a working paper of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

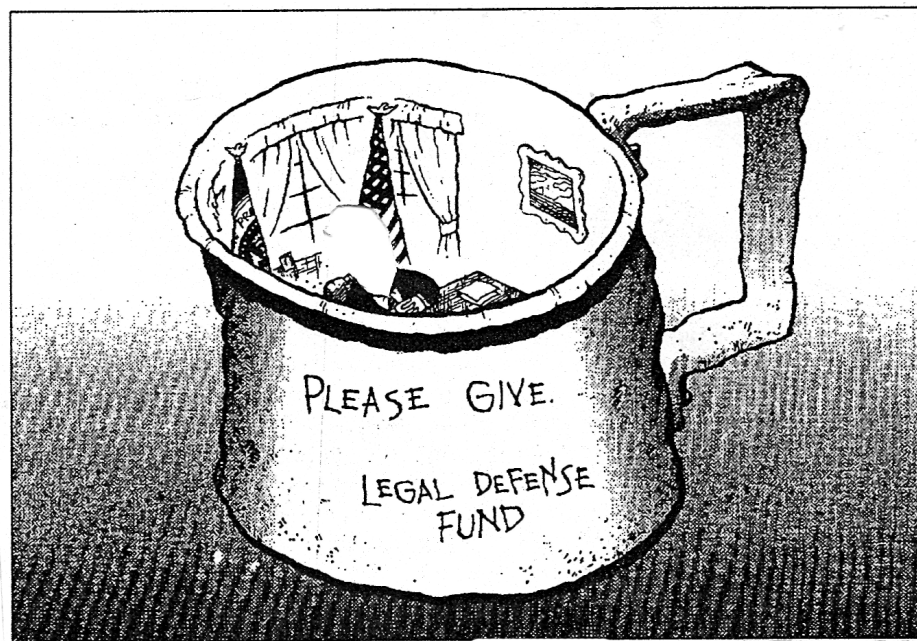
EQUALLY LIKELY TO LOSE AT TRIAL

That meant, Lyengar wrote, that the two sorts of lawyers had "the same underlying distribution of guilt in the cases they represent and thus are equally likely to lose at trial."

Court-appointed lawyers – known in federal judicial jargon as Criminal Justice Act panel lawyers – are needed when public defenders' offices have conflicts of interest in cases involving multiple defendants. They can also fill in as the volume of prosecutions requires.

The vast majority of federal prosecutions end in plea bargains, and only about 5% of them reach trial. Lyengar found that court-appointed lawyers were slightly more likely to take cases to trial and slightly more likely to lose.

But her most important finding, given all the plea bargains, was that defen-



dants represented by court-appointed lawyers received substantially longer sentences.

That suggests that appointed lawyers are less adept at assessing which cases to pursue through trial and at negotiating with prosecutors.

Over all, defendants represented by court-appointed lawyers received sentences averaging about eight months longer.

MORE TIME FOR VIOLENT CRIME FELONS

People convicted of violent crimes were given five more months, while those convicted on weapons charges received nearly a year and half more.

Those convicted of immigration offenses received sentences that averaged 2.5 months less if represented by appointed lawyers.

Appointed lawyers took longer to resolve cases through plea bargains – 20 days on average, a 10% difference.

"These results appear consistent with the hourly wage structure," Lyengar wrote, as that structure creates incentives for appointed lawyers to take longer to resolve cases.

She concluded that appointed lawyers impose an additional \$5,800 in costs to the system for every case they handle.

Analyzing data from California and Arizona, the study found that appointed lawyers were less experienced and had less impressive credentials.

"The court-appointed lawyers tend to be quite young, tend to be from small practices and also they tend to be from lower-ranked law schools," Lyengar said in an interview. "They have a smaller client base and fewer interactions with prosecutors."

HE SAYS IT ISN'T TRUE IN ARIZONA

Jon M. Sands, the federal public defender in Arizona, said he did not recognize the picture painted in the study.

Court-appointed lawyers, Sands said, "are seasoned and committed, and their sentences on the whole don't vary that much from those obtained by public defenders."

Judge Morris B. Hoffman, a Colorado district court judge and a co-author of a 2005 study on the representation of indigent defendants, said the new study's innovation was in its noticing that public defenders and appointed lawyers were assigned randomly in many federal judicial districts.

Judge Hoffman said a number of the study's conclusions were unsurprising given that finding. However they represent their clients, less experienced lawyers tend to do less well in plea negotiations, in deciding which cases to take to trial and in trial outcomes, he said.

David Carroll, research director for the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, said the study's most important point was economic.

"There is," Carroll said, "a cost savings in establishing staff public defender offices."

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Wal-Mart Raises Local Poverty Rates

A study published in the latest issue of *Social Science Quarterly* is the first to examine the effect of Wal-Mart stores on poverty rates.

The study found that nationwide an estimated 20,000 families have fallen below the official poverty line as a result of the chain's expansion.

During the last decade, dependence on the food stamp program nationwide increased by 8%, while in counties with Wal-Mart stores the increase was almost twice as large at 15.3%.

"After controlling for other factors determining changes in the poverty rate over time, we find that both counties with more initial Wal-Mart stores and with more additions of stores between 1987 and 1998 experienced greater increases [or smaller decreases] in family poverty rates during the 1990's economic boom period," said Stephan Goetz, a professor of Agricultural and Regional Economics at Pennsylvania State University.

Although Wal-Mart employs many people living in its communities, for most, the hours worked and the wages paid do not help these families transition out of poverty.

Another effect is that the closing of "mom and pop" stores following the appearance of a Wal-Mart leads to the closing of local businesses that previously supplied those stores, including wholesalers, transporters, logistics providers, accountants, lawyers and others.

The authors state that "by displacing the local class of entrepreneurs, the Wal-Mart chain also destroys local leadership capacity."

They encourage community leaders to think about programs and policies in anticipation of helping those displaced by the arrival of the chain.

This study was published in the June issue of *Social Science Quarterly*.

Friends Meeting (Quakers)

Oklahoma City (Sunday evening) 405-632-7574

Worship at 7:00 pm (use west entry)

Wesley Methodist Church 1401 NW 25 (at Classen)

Stillwater (Sunday morning) 405-372-4839

Tulsa (Sunday afternoon) & nbs! p; 918-743-6827

Marvin Who?

For Bushies It Is All In The Family

Who is Marvin Pierce Bush and how has he profited from that last name? Ever see him in any of the family photos?

Marvin Pierce Bush, born October 22, 1956, is the brother of President George Walker Bush and Florida Governor Jeb Bush and the son of former President George Herbert Walker Bush and Barbara Bush.

He was described in 2000 by ABC News as a "venture capitalist in Alexandria, VA ... Marvin pitched in on his father's campaigns and did his part to help George W. raise cash. He and wife Margaret have two children, Marshall and Walker."

George W. Bush's brother was on the board of directors of a company providing electronic security for the World Trade Center, Dulles International Airport and United Airlines, according to public records.

The company was backed by an investment firm, the Kuwait-American Corp., also linked for years to the Bush family.

THEY COVERED THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

The security company, formerly named Securacom and now named Stratesec, is in Sterling, VA. Its CEO, Barry McDaniel, said the company had a "completion contract" to handle some of the security at the World Trade Center "up to the day the buildings fell down."

It also had a three-year contract to maintain electronic security systems at Dulles Airport, according to a Dulles contracting official.

Securacom/Stratesec also handled some security for United Airlines in the 1990s, according to McDaniel, but it had been completed before his arriving on the board in 1998.

McDaniel confirmed that the company has security contracts with the Department of Defense, including the U.S. Army, but did not detail the nature of the work, citing security concerns.

OPEN-ENDED NO BID CONTRACTS

It has an ongoing line with the General Services Administration – meaning that its bids for contracts are noncompetitive – and also did security work for the Los Alamos laboratory before 1998.

Marvin P. Bush, the president's youngest brother, was a director at Stratesec from 1993 to fiscal year 2000. But the White House has not publicly disclosed Bush connections in any of its responses to 9/11, nor has it mentioned that another Bush-linked business had done security work for the facilities attacked.

Marvin Bush joined Securacom when it was capitalized by the Kuwait-American Corp., a private investment firm in DC that was the security company's major investor, sometimes holding a controlling interest. Marvin Bush has not responded to telephone calls and e-mails for comment.

BUSH FAMILY AND KUWAITI FAMILY LINKED

KuwAm has been linked to the Bush family financially since the Gulf War. One of its principals and a member of the Kuwaiti royal family, Mishal Yousef Saud al Sabah, is serving on the board of Stratesec.

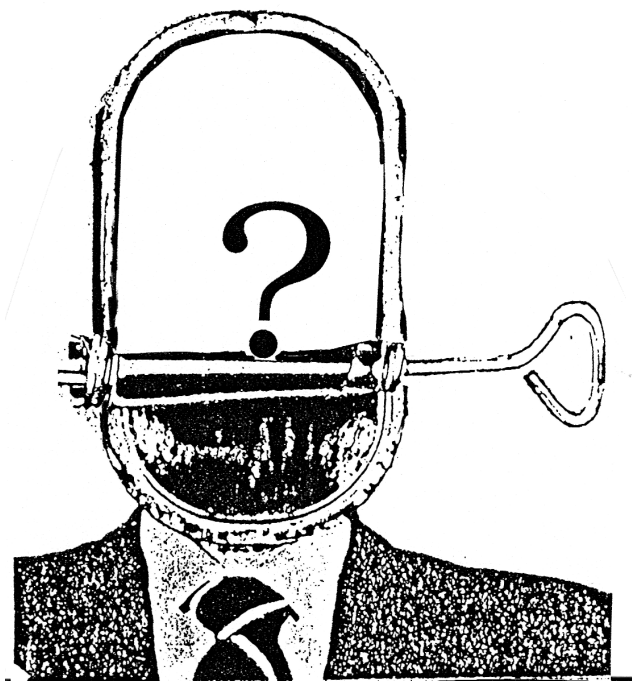
The managing director at KuwAm, Wirt D. Walker III, was also a principal at Stratesec, and Walker, Marvin Bush and al Sabah are listed in SEC filings as significant shareholders in both companies during that period.

Marvin Bush's last year on the board at Stratesec coincided with his first year on the board of HCC Insurance, formerly Houston Casualty Co., one of the insurance carriers for the WTC. He left the HCC board in November 2002.

None of these connections has been looked at during the extensive investigations since 9/11. McDaniel says principals and other personnel at Stratesec have not been questioned or debriefed by the FBI or other investigators. Walker declined to answer the same question regarding KuwAm, referring to the public record.

HE ALSO HEADS A TULSA-BASED COMPANY

Walker is also chairman and CEO of Aviation General, a Tulsa-based aviation company with two subsidiaries. SEC filings also show al Sabah as a principal



and shareholder in Aviation General, which was recently de-listed by the Nasdaq. Stratesec was de-listed by the American Stock Exchange in October 2002.

The suite in which Marvin Bush was annually re-elected, according to public records, is located in the Watergate in space leased to the Saudi government.

The company now holds shareholder meetings in space leased by the Kuwaiti government there. The White House has not responded to various requests for comment.

Speaking of the Watergate, Riggs National Bank, where Saudi Princess Al-Faisal had her "Saudi money trail" bank account, has as one of its executives Jonathan Bush, an uncle of the president.

WILL THEY BE REQUIRED TO TURN OVER RECORDS?

The public has not learned whether Riggs – which services 95% of Washington's foreign embassies – will be turning over records relating to Saudi finance.

Meanwhile, Bush has nominated William H. Donaldson to head the Securities and Exchange Commission. Donaldson, a longtime Bush family friend, was a Yale classmate of Jonathan Bush.

On the very day of the tragic space shuttle crash, the government appointed an independent investigative panel, and rightly so. Why didn't it do the same on Sept. 12, 2001?

From Margie Burns, "All in the [Profiteering] First Family," Prince George's Journal [Maryland], April 15, 2004:

"A controversial \$327 million contract awarded in January by the U.S. Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA] in Iraq potentially benefited Winston Partners, the private investment firm of Marvin P. Bush.

NO END TO BUSH FAMILY TIES

"The contract, to equip the Iraqi armed forces and Civil Defense Corps, went to Nour USA, a Virginia company formed last May, which also received an \$80 million CPA contract in July. The contract has now been canceled, and the CPA has re-opened the competition.

"For its ties to Ahmed Chalabi, a member of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council ... The new company, or consortium, also has ties to Bush family interests.

"The Nour group claims ties to several companies backed or owned by Winston Partners: Hobart West, a Fortune 500 personnel-services company; LogoTel, a clothing company; and Axolotl, a computer-services company in medical care ... Other companies in Winston Partners' portfolio, including AMSEC, where Bush's partner, L. Scott sits on the board of directors, also benefits from federal contracts."

Michael Braham formerly worked for L. Paul Bremer, then head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.

– SourceWatch is an encyclopedia of people, issues and groups shaping the public agenda. It is a project of the Center for Media & Democracy. E-mail at sourcewatch.org

Rove Made Fools Of Religious Right

By Bill Moyers

What struck me about my fellow Texan, Karl Rove, is that he knew how to win elections as if they were divine interventions.

You may think God summoned Billy Graham to Florida on the eve of the 2000 election to endorse George W. Bush just in the nick of time, but if it did happen that way, the good Lord was speaking with a Texas accent.

Karl Rove figured out a long time ago that the way to take an intellectually incurious, draft-averse, naughty playboy in a flight jacket with chewing tobacco in his back pocket and make him governor of Texas, was to sell him as God's anointed in a state where preachers and televangelists outnumber even oil derricks and jack rabbits.

Using church pews as precincts Rove turned religion into a weapon of political combat – a battering ram, aimed at the devil's minions, especially at gay people.

It's so easy, as Karl knew, to scapegoat people you outnumber, and if God is love, as rumor has it, Rove knew that, in politics, you better bet on fear and loathing.

Never mind that in stroking the basest bigotry of true believers you coarsen both politics and religion.

At the same time he was recruiting an army of the Lord for the born-again Bush, Rove was also shaking down corporations for campaign cash. Crony capi-

talism became a biblical injunction.

Greed and God won four elections in a row – twice in the Lone Star State and twice again in the nation at large. But the result has been to leave Texas under the thumb of big money with huge holes ripped in its social contract, and the U.S. government in shambles – paralyzed, polarized, and mired in war, debt and corruption.

Rove himself is deeply enmeshed in some of the scandals being investigated as we speak, including those missing e-mails that could tell us who turned the attorney general of the United States into a partisan sock puppet.

Rove is riding out of Dodge City as the posse rides in. At his press conference he asked God to bless the president and the country, even as reports were circulating that he himself had confessed to friends his own agnosticism; he wished he could believe, but he cannot.

That kind of intellectual honesty is to be admired, but you have to wonder how all those folks on the Christian Right must feel discovering they were used for partisan reasons by a skeptic, a secular manipulator.

On his last play of the game all Karl Rove had to offer them was a Hail Mary pass, while telling himself there's no one there to catch it.

– Moyers is on OETA, Fridays at 8 p.m

Dems Finding God On Campaign Trail

By Bruce Ledewitz

The performance by the three leading Democratic presidential candidates – Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards – concerning their religious faith was good politics.

Their approach to the topic of God was reminiscent of the story popularly attributed to George Wallace, Alabama's segregationist governor, on race: The Democrats are obviously determined never again to be "out-Goded" by the Republicans.

The Democrats have thrown in the secular towel at least on symbolic religious expression in the public square. In 2008 there will be no talk of removing the word "God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.

Nor will any candidate promise to eject the Ten Commandments from courthouse walls. There will be frequent allusions to God and to the role faith plays in the life of the candidate.

CAMPAIGN COULD DEMOLISH THE WALL

This campaign is likely to demolish what is left of the wall of separation between church and state in America.

The only remaining religious taboo for the Democrats is the suggestion that Obama made last summer in his well-known "Call to Renewal Keynote Address" that "democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate their concerns" into secular language when debating public issues. This supposed demand never made any sense.

Religious people have the same right to free speech as everyone else. If they want to preach biblical values as the basis of their political proposals, that is up to them. The rest of us are free to vote the other way.

Judging by the CNN debate, we will probably not be hearing again about this "demand" by the secular speech police.

DEMOCRATS REFLECT A TREND

The forthright embrace of religion by the Democrats this year is part of a trend toward more public religious expression that began in the 2000 election cycle and helped re-elect born again George W. Bush in 2004.

That trend also has begun to be reflected in U.S. Supreme Court decisions on church-state issues. In recent years the court upheld a school voucher program, split on two public displays of the Ten Commandments and, on technical grounds, reversed a lower court decision to remove the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.

The additions of far right Chief Justice John G. Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court will probably accelerate this movement. There is now a solid five Catholic justice majority.

IT WILL AFFECT FUTURE JUDICIAL NOMINEES

With the Democrats' newfound commitment to religion in the public square,

It's A Mad, Mad Primary World

By Karen Webb

Isn't this already a really raucous primary pre-pre-season and it is likely to get worse?

There are enough candidates on each side to decide this presidential campaign by playing baseball, volleyball or hockey. I am for having them beat each other senseless with hockey sticks.

Of course, thanks to several really strangely written executive decrees, Bush may just stay in there until death do us part and Bushes have long lifelines.

Recently, the Ds lined up on Soldier Field and answered labor questions, except for when Hillary was asked about the lovely picture on the cover of Fortune declaring her the sweetheart of Corporate America and she took a pass. Hillary did a two-step and a do-si-do around Edward's slam and declared she was going after the GOP and not her fellow Ds, right up until she went after Obama declaring he is what my dad would say, "still wet behind the ears" as far as foreign policy goes.

Obama comes back with the declaration that a number of people in the pack actually voted for the biggest foreign policy disaster in his memory. Touche!!

STILL GIVING BUSH BLANK CHECKS

What is worse is that some of them are still voting to give Bush more blank checks to pay for it, while allowing the shredding of the Fourth Amendment.

It would be hard for Hillary to go after the GOP on that particular issue because it could get to the point where she has to shoot herself in the foot, again, again and again.

I will eventually have to vote for one of them and it can't be a dark horse, like Kucinich, because I don't want to chance getting another lunatic R in the White House and they are getting more loony by the day.

Now, the Rs are getting really interesting because they are beginning to sound a little like the Inquisition, Crusades and the Salem Witch Trials all rolled into one. Go ahead dunk Romney and let's see if he floats enough for most Mormons to vote for him, much less all those other Christians who preach that Mormonism is a cult.

Nothing P.O.'s a bunch of Christians as much as having a guy ignore the doctrines of his religion's particular interpretation or their own particular interpretation of the Good Book. It is the difference between being a hypocrite to ones



even future Democratic judicial nominees are unlikely to favor a strict separation of church and state.

What effect will all this religiosity have on actual public policy? Surprisingly, the answer is probably not much.

For one thing, the religious right for years has had a political free ride running against the Democrats as the anti-God party.

When that strategy is pre-empted, as the candidates on CNN were trying to do by embracing God, the debate shifts to cultural issues not nearly so one-sided as is support for religion itself.

The public is split on abortion and gay rights, unlike the desire to retain God in the Pledge of Allegiance, where the public is solidly united.

THE SHIFT WON'T HELP FUNDAMENTALISTS

So the shift to more religious expression does not mean more political support for issues favored by religious conservatives.

The other problem for the religious right is that running against the wall of separation is easier than coming up with a substitute once the wall is down.

John Edwards insisted on CNN that although we may be religious, we are not a Christian nation. Most people strongly agree with him about that.

Will the new Bush majority on the court reverse the court's 1962 decision striking down prayer in public schools?

It is difficult to have public school prayer without coercion of nonbelievers,

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own beliefs or being as dense as dirt for not believing in your interpretation.

DON'T ASK ME HOW GOD DID IT

Don't write to me, I find it just as difficult to believe all the order in the universe just suddenly exploded from nothing as to believe God did it in 144 hours. I have no idea how it was done and really don't care. If you believe that God is all-powerful he could have used evolution, duct tape or a magic wand. If Moses can talk to a burning bush then Joseph Smith can talk to rocks, salamanders or tinkler toys.

While I don't think religious beliefs have any place in the discussion, once you get into the GOP race for who is most Christian you are going to be asked religious questions and it won't be Democrats doing most of the asking.

I suggested years ago it would eventually come to who is the most Christian and who has the correct interpretation of the Bible.

If they are running on their Christian family values then I think we should question them about the organizations or churches they belong to or have belonged to and the history of those organizations because their religious beliefs could be inserted into their interpretation of the Constitution or writing amendments to the Constitution.

MORMONS, CATHOLICS AND REHNQUIST, OH MY

Why not have a Mormon president? We have a Catholic Supreme Court. They won't elect David Duke because of the KKK, but there have been beaucoup of racists on the Supreme Court. Rehnquist wrote some pretty tacky stuff in his day.

Bush isn't even a mediocre Christian and look what he has done. So, do these guys follow John Hagee, D. James Kennedy or [Kansas preacher Fred] Phelps? I hear a lot of Hagee because my mother-in-law listens to him and he is convinced that Jesus won't come back until we nuke Iran. The anti-christ wants peace – which means Christ is pro-war. He doesn't believe in turning the other cheek, he believes we should slap first.

My guess is Hagee didn't vote for Gore, even with Lieberman on the ticket, and he thinks the Jewish state can do no wrong, but he also can't wait to watch them wiped out in the tribulation. Kennedy believes we need to bring back stoning rebellious children. Phelps believes God hates all of us because we haven't lined

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Lack Of Dentistry

The Large Divide In Caring For Our Kids

By Bob Herbert

Teri Hatcher, one of the stars of the television series "Desperate Housewives," was on David Letterman's show, talking very animatedly about a time when her daughter needed emergency dental care.

"It was causing her some pain," Hatcher said. "And then, of course, it was a Friday night. Overnight the whole thing blew up and it turned out to be an abscess."

Where to get a dentist on a Saturday?

Luckily, Hatcher's best friend is married to a dentist who was more than happy to open up his office that Saturday. But he needed an assistant. Hatcher volunteered.

She digressed: "I hate the dentist ... Just my whole life, you know. It's the worst. I would do anything to get out of going to the dentist. Really. Anything."

But Hatcher stood there like a trouper as the dentist examined her daughter's tooth.

AN ABSCESS REQUIRING SURGERY

"He sees it is an abscess, and he has to do surgery," she said. "So you ... I'm trying to - I hate it. I'm squeamish. I'm going to throw up, and then I'm trying to pull it together."

"So he does the Novocaine and gives her a little of the gas. She is perfectly fine, because she's going, 'I love the dentist. I want to come here every day.'

"And then, of course, I'm thinking, 'Can I take a tank of that home? Because that is really what I need.'"

And so on. The story, of course, had a happy ending. Hatcher's daughter was fine. Letterman got to tell a raunchy dentist joke. The audience was amused, and Hatcher eventually exited to a robust round of applause.

I was particularly interested in the segment because just a few hours earlier I had filed a column for the next day's paper about health care for children.

THIS BOY'S CASE WAS DIFFERENT

The column included the story of Deamonte Driver, a homeless 12-year-old from Prince George's County, MD, who also had an abscessed tooth.

Now, if I had been in Hatcher's position, I would have done exactly as she did. I would have knocked down doors if necessary to get help for a child in distress.

So this is no criticism of her. It's an illustration of the kind of stunning differences in fortune that can face youngsters living at opposite ends of America's vast economic divide.

MADNESS

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up all the gays and either forced them into submission or shot them all.

There are Christians, and there are Christians, and there are Christians. Romney shouldn't be so naive as to think that changing his views on gays, guns and choice is suddenly going to get him elected, without justifying all of it with not only the Bible, but also the Book of Mormon.

GOP LOVE AFFAIR WITH RISQUE RUDY

The puzzling thing about this whole Republican primary is that the guy who keeps winning in the polls has married his cousin, cheated on her and married that mistress, moved another mistress into the same house [a really big house] with his second wife and their children, then he married that mistress.

In the in-between time he just had fun. He moved in with a gay couple, did a couple of silly things in drag - which doesn't make him either gay or a drag queen - and he is pro-choice.

I think he claims to be Catholic which makes him an over-the-cliff and into purgatory progressive Catholic and only a hop, skip and a jump less sinful than the pedophile clergy, but unlike Clinton he makes honest women out of his adulteresses.

They will either choose the very best Christian that a majority of Christians could vote for or they will choose a man we can only hope will take his inaugural oath more seriously than his wedding vows and who makes Clinton look like a model of marital fidelity.

If they do elect Guiliani they will be able to impeach him shortly after he moves Mrs. G #4 into the Lincoln bedroom because I don't think Nancy believes in plural wives or concubines.

THE GENERAL ELECTION'S BOTTOM LINE

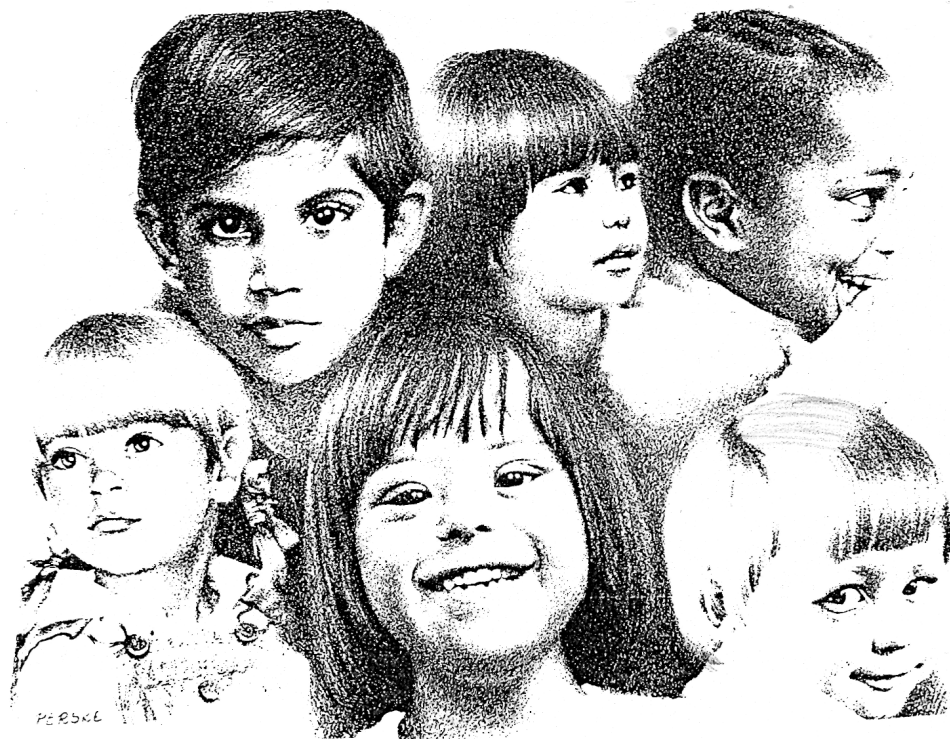
In the general election it will come down to whether or not gays have the same rights as the rest of us and whether or not Congress gets to be consulted on women's health.

As long as they are in favor of persecuting and prosecuting gays and forcing women to have children, then who cares what else they do or how many soldiers have to die for the corporate bottom line?

Everything is legal in love and war, unless you either want a same sex lover or gays in the war or if your inferior condom breaks and you get pregnant, you want women in combat or you don't really want to make your rapist or incestuous relative a daddy.

It will be interesting and maddening.

- The author lives in Moore



Deamonte needed his tooth pulled, a procedure that was estimated to cost \$80. But his mother, Alyce Driver, had no health insurance for her children.

She believes their Medicaid coverage lapsed early this year because of a bureaucratic foul-up, perhaps because paperwork was mailed to a homeless shelter after they had left.

In any event, it would have been difficult for Ms. Driver to find an oral surgeon willing to treat a Medicaid patient.

HIS UNTREATED PAIN GREW WORSE

Untreated, the pain in Deamonte's tooth grew worse. He was taken to a hospital emergency room, where he was given medication for pain and sinusitis and sent home.

What started as a toothache now became a nightmare. Bacteria from the abscess had spread to Deamonte's brain. The child was in agony, and on Feb. 25 he died.

There's a presidential election under way, but this sort of thing is not a big part of the campaign. American children are dying because of a lack of access to health care, and we're worried about Mitt Romney's religion and asking candidates to raise their hands to show whether they believe in evolution.

I'm starting to believe in time travel because there's no doubt this nation is moving backward.

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul," Nelson Mandela once said, "than the way in which it treats its children."

There are nine million children who lack health care in the U.S. and millions more who are eligible for coverage but fall through the cracks for one reason or another.

WE SHOULD GUARANTEE BASIC HEALTH CARE

What we need is a national commitment to provide basic health care to all children, not just the children of the well-to-do. This should be a no-brainer.

You're a child in the United States? You've got health care. We're not going to let you die from a toothache. We're better than that.

We're not going to let your family go bankrupt because you've got cancer or some other disease, or because you've been in a terrible accident.

The cost? Don't fall for that bogeyman.

There's plenty of give in America's glittering \$13 trillion economy. What's the sense of being the richest nation on the planet if you can't even afford to keep your children healthy and alive?

© New York Times

DEMOCRATS

From Page 18

which is something even conservative justices strongly oppose.

In addition, public school prayer often requires that the government choose one prayer. It is difficult to do that without adopting the religious language of some particular religious group as opposed to others. That is also something a majority of justices will probably reject.

QUESTIONING OUR PUBLIC THEOLOGY

The real problem with God in the public square is that our public theology is so juvenile.

The candidate testimonials we heard on CNN may have been sincere, but they were excessively individualistic and sentimental.

The God of the Bible is not just a friend to help us through personal difficulties. Although loving and compassionate, the God of the Bible is also the Lord of history who punishes injustice.

It is unlikely that triumphant America, with its military power and great wealth - attributes no presidential candidate is going to fundamentally challenge - is going to fare very well in the sight of such a God.

Before welcoming God into the public square, maybe we should remember the words of the prophet Amos: "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!"

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