



The [www.mymac.com](http://www.mymac.com) writings  
of Steve Consilvio

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and Digital Dust.*

**THINKING DIFFERENT:  
The Prelude**



HMMM.....

Good writers have two things in common: they prefer to be understood rather than admired; and they do not write for knowing and over-acute readers.

- Friedrich Nietzsche

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## A RANT OF LOVE

Wake up my sleeping child.  
Wake up my sleeping beauty.  
The birds have arrived.  
Are they here to sing?  
Are they here to prey?  
There is only one way to find out,  
we must meet them out on the open field.

We run,  
we walk,  
we stand still.  
Occasionally we swim.  
We are like a tree compared to a bird.  
We sway in our roots,  
we change colors,  
we grow,  
we lose limbs,  
we wither and die in the same place we started.  
Home in our sleep, or out in the field.

What are we planting today?  
For that will be the harvest that the birds bring tomorrow.  
Tomorrow has arrived today,  
so wake up my sleeping child.  
Wake up my sleeping beauty.

# INTRODUCTION

Evidence suggests that in 2003 I was spending too much time thinking about my Apple computer. I was reading the Mac websites daily (still do,) commenting with Charles Moore at [www.applelinks.com](http://www.applelinks.com), etc. After a series of problems regarding my iBook and warranty repair, I “got it off my chest” by writing an essay about Apple’s business model. I posted it on my political blog [www.behappyandfree.com](http://www.behappyandfree.com)

The essay made a small impact on the Mac-web, and Roger Born contacted me suggesting I should join him and other writers and lovers of Apple at [www.mymac.com](http://www.mymac.com). Since I had no audience, and really didn’t consider myself a writer (even though I had always wanted to be) I jumped on the opportunity! I had never even heard of [www.mymac.com](http://www.mymac.com).

After a brief conversation with Tim, the publisher, I was “on board.” I was really thrilled. And I asked him specifically if I could publish anything I want. He said “yes.” Since he didn’t know about my political ideas, I asked again. “Are you sure? Anything?” Again he affirmed that mymac was a writers site, and that people were free to express a wide range of opinions. The only criteria was that the writing be good. So off I went on a journey that is catalogued here.

Writing, for me, is often a process of thinking outloud. I think that is clearly revealed in the essays here. I am struggling to understand the world around me, which is to say that I am struggling to understand myself. Roger always said to write about yourself, because that is the thing you know best. I loathe that advice still, but I cannot dispute it.

If you read between the lines of these essays, then you should easily see a person struggling to understand. Here I am, mid-forties, business owner, college graduate with a history degree, selling promotional items and screen-printing, and essentially living “the American Dream.” Am I having a mid-life crisis? I don’t think so. I have been working on these issues discussed here my whole life. The difference is that now I am documenting my thoughts and engaging people more directly through the web.

In 2003, of course, the “big event” of the generation were the attacks on 9/11, my birthday. I always had a premonition that my birthday would be famous, but I never knew why. I never sensed it was good, though. Even when 9/11 came and went I couldn’t explain the feeling. But on December 7th of 2001 I recognized that feeling again. That was the “day of infamy,” or so we are taught to believe. And the chill of that date is exactly how my birthday made me feel. Even more weird is that in forty something years I never realized that my birthday was 9-1-1 like an emergency call to the police. The mind is a funny thing, and it is amazing how we miss so many obvious things in our environment.

There are some mistakes, (intellectual errors,) in the essays that follow; they generally fall into the category of still believing old lies. I call this collection a prelude because the best is still yet to come in my writings, and in the time between when these were written and today. I have already written more things which

expose the more subtle errors in thinking (mine, yours and ours.) My plan, at least today, is to create another collection of writings with this “interlude” period, and then work earnestly on a serious complete work which gets into the nitty gritty in a whole new way. Hopefully I have learned something from my errors.

My most far-reaching work here is From Slavery to Utopia, where I discuss the ideas behind making constitutional changes. I have since abandoned or reworked the idea of a flat tax into something much more simple, which I generally call a Dirt Tax. More details on that idea will be coming in another publication, but the seeds to all my ideas can be found in this collection, which is why I thought it wise to preserve them.

I have never been one to plan my writings, I sort of just dump it all out and then assemble it afterwards. Writing an actual “book” will be a new experience. Part of my desire to catalogue all my writings is that I recently lost about six months work when the hard-drive in my laptop died. It contained a 500 page Keynote (slideshow) presentation, and an essay of some 40+ pages. About 20 pages of the forty page essay were not lost, but there were also a lot of short finished and unfinished essays and notes that were lost, too. While this caused me no emotional distress, I thought perhaps I should be more careful and get things into a physical format, which led me to creating a printable collection of my essays. (What you are reading was assembled in InDesign and then exported to a pdf so it can be easily printed.)

I decided to start with the mymac.com essays for obvious reasons; that is where I started writing earnestly. But it also because if you visit that site my writings and any and all existence of myself has been removed. Like the proverbial photographs that Winston Smith dropped down the tube in an attempt to destroy history at the Department of Truth in Orwell’s 1984, I too have been “dropped down the tube.”

I was “asked to leave” (my posting privileges were revoked) at mymac.com when I posted Osama’s Letter to America, which he had written way back in 2002. For me, it confirmed everything that I thought he was thinking. The old adage “keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer” comes to mind. In exploring his errors I came to understand mine (and ours) better. Undoubtedly this is why Jesus says to “Love your Enemy.” He is you and you are him.

Of course, this breakthrough was great for me, but it did me little good at mymac.com. I continued to post at the forums, but my posts were regularly deleted, and eventually my IP address was banned so I couldn’t post, or even read, etc. The Fear of Words was in full glory at mymac.com. While it was only my words in the fire, it was a virtual book-burning nevertheless. I have no hard feelings, I only tell the story because it will inevitably be re-lived again. All authority is hypocritical, and the rebel is a hypocrite, too. If you honestly try to find the truth, then there are many whom you will inevitably frighten. The mirror is an ugly place, and people run from words that make them uncomfortable, or they silence the person who brings hard questions and harder choices. I think it rather fitting that my last post, which got me banned, were not my words at all, but the words of the world’s newest heretic, Osama bin Laden.

The three best posts in this collection are not my words either, they are Thomas Merton’s “Rain and the Rhinoceros,” General Smedley Butler’s “War is a Racket,” and Osama’s “Letter to America.” If you read nothing else, then you should read those.

You will notice a shift in quality from when the mymac.com website went from a publisher-edited format to a blog format. The blog encourages shorter, more random posts. Perhaps it was the nature of my “random thinking” that caused the conflict with the publisher and other writers, eh? Thoughtcrime was Winston Smith’s offense, too.

While it is possible to silent the messenger, it is not possible to silence the messages. Fortunately, for me, I no longer see the evil in others, only their (failing) struggle to be good. At some point we need to make changes for peace and prosperity to be possible. That is as true for the ideas of Osama and the Islamists as it is of the ideas of Americans and everyone else on this blue marble, too. Two wrongs do not make a right. Or as Gandhi put it, “an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.” We need to treat each other more respectfully, and it is equally important to explore our differences. To “agree to disagree” is the worst idea in the world.

If there is a line at the shadow of darkness and light, I seem to have passed over it. At least I hope so. Perhaps these words of mine will help you find a path in your journey through the shadows that you missed previously. Follow the light.

Peace,  
Steve Consilvio  
Auburn, MA  
7/16/2006

# 1. MONOGRAPH ON THE APPLE BUSINESS MODEL

Wednesday, 05/14/03

(originally published at [www.behappyandfree.com](http://www.behappyandfree.com))

## Introduction

In 1984, Apple and the Macintosh challenged the world with the dramatic portrayal of a revolutionary woman hurling a hammer at an image of the establishment. With the Twentieth Anniversary of that event approaching, now is a good time to take a look back at this revolution and take stock of the new revolution that the Mac OS X operating system offers.

Despite Time Magazine's 80 Days That Changed The World, it would appear that Apple doesn't get much credit for the revolution it sparked in personal computing. As the leading innovator in the computer market, and with a balance sheet holding of four billion in cash, neither its stock value nor its market share is very high. Every few months or so, a journalist reports on impending trouble for Apple Computer. Part of the reason for this negative press is that its main competitor has a 95% market share and billions more in cash. By any other standards, Apple would be judged to be an astonishing success, but a bigger question remains: Why is the Apple market share so small when it has a superior product? Blaming Microsoft for the "ills" of Apple really misses the point. Both companies were formed early in the computer age, both had product, innovation and opportunity at a critical time, but their history is vastly different. Apple's small market share must be the result of its business model. While the business model has failed the aspirations of the Macintosh Revolution, there is a New Revolution. The Macintosh has given birth to OS X and the Digital Age.

## Structure of Current Business Model

The current Apple business model follows three broad industry categories: Software Engineering, Hardware Manufacturing, and Retail. In essence, Apple is a conglomeration of three successful but completely different company types: Microsoft, Dell and The Gap. It is the Software Manufacturing, the core of the Apple genius, which drives the Hardware and Retail categories.

To understand how this business model limits Apple's market share, lets examine each leg of the business model individually.

### Software Engineering.

Clearly, Apple is the world leader both in quality and functionality. Software is extremely profitable too, as Microsoft, Intuit, Oracle, Adobe and many other companies demonstrate. Apple has set the technological pace for functionality and the end-user experience. With OS X, Apple will be developing faster and better software at a frantic pace for all of its general and niche markets: Education, Entertainment, Enterprise, Consumer. Apple is not always first to a market with an application, but when it focuses its developmental skills on a target, the final product is very impressive. Its best strength however is in the Operating System software, not the application products. There is no equal to the Mac OS.

### Hardware Manufacturing.

Apple design and creativity attracts and inspires copycats because of its technological prowess and innovative design. Cost of ownership is lower, built-in functionality is greater, and interoperability with the OS is tighter and easier. The hardware sales base has now extended into servers and mp3 players, and other tech appliances

can not be far behind.

### **Retail.**

Despite superior product offerings, Apple has failed to capture a large market share, but not for lack of effort. Clone licensing failed to generate greater sales. When the multi-colored iMac was introduced, newly won retailers resisted stocking the various colors. In general, the large retailers' salespeople knew PC's and wanted to sell PC's. The original store-within-a-store approach at Comp USA didn't work, and now a direct Apple employee staffs each site to ensure that the technology is introduced properly. With this string of setbacks in mind, Apple has turned to the Apple Store in high traffic upscale malls to bring the product direct to the users.

So how is Apple doing? Does this business model work? The short answer is that despite journalistic prophecies of doom, Apple is profitable and should be supplying great solutions well into the future. The long answer is a bit more complex. If each of the three legs of Apple were operated independently, how would each division hold up against the competition? Imagine if Apple, instead of Microsoft, was broken into three independent divisions. How would this affect Apple's market share?

### **Comparative Analysis of each Structural Leg**

**Software Engineering.** The most successful software companies write product for both platforms. As an independent developer, Apple Software would want to sell as many copies of its Operating System and iApplications as possible, which means it would target Windows on White boxes. From the software perspective, the opportunity is not to put Intel chips in an Apple box, but rather to put Apple OS in an Intel White box. Apple OS running as an upgrade to many of the established PC installations generates a huge worldwide market share overnight. Instead of trying to get users to Switch when buying new equipment, users could instead Choose their OS, and use the equipment they already own. An approach like this would put Apple market share and profits through the roof.

**Hardware Manufacturing.** Even PC lovers love Apple hardware. Cool, sleek and innovative, Apple hardware anticipates both the user needs now and future technologies. But more often than not, Apple creates and abandons a new form factor far too quickly. The cube for example, was discontinued before many had a chance to buy one, and others still want the cool-looking clamshell iBook. If the grumblings of Mac users are any indication, PC users must be interested in buying Mac styled hardware running an Intel chip. Because Apple currently focuses on selling the whole package, it misses the opportunity to manufacturer more product. The success of the Windows iPod clearly shows the opportunity for profit and market penetration by creating PC based hardware. An independent hardware unit would push these advantages, and bring its style to both the PC and Mac worlds. Rather than competing strictly on price head-to-head with the Dells of the world, Apple could be offering a premium PC box, with all the elegance of an Apple. An iMac, an iBook and a PowerBook for PC users would all be huge sellers.

### **Retail.**

The Apple Stores are unlike any other computer store. Flashy, boutique-like, with trained staff and plenty of opportunity to touch, test and try. But do eight people in black t-shirts wandering around a boutique and giving free training presentations translate to market share? A computer store is more than just customer attention and sales of new hardware, it needs to be a resource and a solution for day to day computing problems. With high visibility, high rent, and few SKU's, the Apple Store is hardly the formula for a franchise. More often than not, the need for a card, an adaptor, on-site network installation, custom configuration or programming will be referred to a local Apple reseller or a web warehouse. Without any value-added services, furniture, accessories, and full service solutions, the stores only meet the needs of the beginner users. The Apple Stores can only continue if the platform adoption rate continues to expand. With any bump in the road, the stores will take the first hit. Once the novelty wears off, it is unlikely that power users will be attracted to the Apple Store formula in the

long run.

Obviously, Apple as a PC hardware vendor misses the whole point of the Macintosh Revolution. And nowhere in the last twenty years was there either a technological opportunity or a will to merge the software onto both platforms. Still, a market share of 5% after twenty years is hardly an electoral success. People have voted with their dollars consistently for the brute on the large TV screen. The hammer left only a ding.

## **Sales Strategy**

Another component of the Apple business model is to never pre-announce a product, the strategy being that every new product release becomes a newsworthy event. This free press comes at an enormous cost. First, it positions the product as a spectator sport. Is it news or entertainment? For most, it appears as a futuristic scientific breakthrough, like living on Mars. It is product info about a product many have never seen, delivered in such a way that they cannot be expected to act upon it.

People want computing to be as complex as plugging in a toaster. Despite a software that delivers this plug and play simplicity, the newscycle advertising only whets the appetite of power Windows users, not potential buyers. The vast majority of computer owners and news watchers are not power users, and do not understand any significance of a product release, assuming any significant new features were mentioned at all. Free press is a poor substitute for advertising, and the efforts to keep things under wraps to serve this strategy is a waste of resources and goodwill. Computers are just the toasters of the information age. People expect to walk into the local store, buy a computer and take it home. While the Apple Store does deliver this much, they are too spread out to make much of a long-term impact either nationally or globally. And there is no reason at all for a large manufacturer to spend its time and resources in training low end users.

## **What's Missing?**

Given Apple's assets of Software Engineering and Hardware Manufacturing, a dedicated customer base, and a development standard that the industry copies, what is it about this business model that it can only generate only 5% of the vote?

Have you noticed what is missing in this business model?

We have Apple.

Apple as Software Engineer.

Apple as Hardware Manufacturer.

Apple as Retailer.

We also have Apple as tech support via AppleCare.

Apple as Service Center for warranties and repairs.

Apple as direct seller to education and

Apple as direct seller to enterprise, entertainment, consumer

Apple as partner with big box retailers and web warehouses.

And soon we will have Apple as the local record store.

What is missing is the primary engine for the growth of the computer industry, namely, SMALL BUSINESSES.

The backbone of the world economy is small businesses, and Apple is ignoring almost all of them.

## **Small Business**

Small businesses are not a target market for Apple as either an end-user or as partner in their distribution method. There must be at least one hundred outlets for a PC buyer for every one Mac computer outlet. The hoards of white box computer builders will never leave Windows if there is no alternative to Choose. These resellers understand the superiority of the Mac OS, but since Apple locks them out they service their customers with the tools they can provide.

Likewise, small businesses owners will never tolerate consumer driven customer service when their livelihood is at stake. Small businesses want and need the services of a local reseller that is responsive and on-site. Despite the successes of Apple's education sales, it is clear that local resellers would be better able to serve all the local market. As Tip O'Neil once said, "All politics is local," so too is all business.

### **Copy Success**

There is no industry in the world that sells using the Apple business model. Microsoft is successful not because their product is better, but because you can buy it anywhere, and it is sold everywhere. You can even buy it for your Macintosh. Microsoft supports and encourages its dealer network. Wherever there is an opportunity to sell, Microsoft takes it. The same can be said of HP, Compaq and Epson and many others in many industries. By ignoring small resellers, Apple has pinned all its hopes on large retailers, its own sales force, and now on itself as a large retailer. No matter how successful this strategy is, Apple will leave more money on the table than they can possibly pick up. Al Gore is a good choice to help manage a large growing organization, but no organization can be all things to all people. Retailers, by definition, are middlemen. Manufacturers sell to the wholesalers who sell to retailers. Black and Decker has no idea that I own one of their toasters, but when I call Apple, they instantly know the serial number of all my purchases for at least the last four years. Why? Of what value is this relationship to either me or Apple? As the PC market attests, a large percentage of services provided by Apple can be delivered better locally.

### **Relationships**

Apple is profitable because of the sheer size of the computer industry that has grown up around them. Since business is primarily about relationships, and Apple has chosen to value the relationship with the end-user higher than their relationship with the distribution channel, Apple puts itself at a competitive disadvantage. Where most manufacturers can focus exclusively on their product and the distribution chain, Apple is trying to do all the work in the middle. Instead of a stable pyramid structure where the manufacturer is at the top point, with wholesalers, resellers, and end users in successive layers beneath them, Apple is at the bottom point of an inverted pyramid, trying to support and balance the enduser, the Hardware Manufacturing, Software Engineering, sales, support, repair, new products, new technologies, new innovations. This is too much to balance in an old static industry. It would require superhuman abilities in the fast paced technology world, and the Apple market share reflects this difficulty. Even a genius can not be all things to all people.

The open source community is a great asset to the Apple development cycle. But it is not the technological prowess that makes that community powerful; it is the critical mass achieved by the diversity of people. The Apple genius attracts a loyal following that allows this flawed business model to be profitable, but it fails to attract the diversity of buyers necessary to win a revolution. The Macintosh revolution has been lost, the Revolution of the Digital Age lies before us. The Apple business model, thus far, has excluded the very same people the revolution was aimed at: the average user, the small business, the middle-class. The lone runner still runs alone.

### **History**

During the course of the Macintosh Revolution, Steve Jobs was forced out of Apple. It is no surprise that the Macintosh revolution started to fail rapidly with his departure, despite some attempts during his absence to alter the business model. With Steve Jobs back at the helm, and Mac OS X released, Apple's future is very bright. The question is, does Apple have the courage to change its business model, or is it simply going to repeat the same mistakes?

Without altering the business model, Apple's unfinished revolution is sure to repeat itself. It is this mixed history of technological achievements and market share failure that often leads journalists to comment negatively about Apple. All businesses and industries have cycles, but Apple is truly a unique entity, both in what it accomplishes and in how it is organized. The sales and market share effect of this business model can only be charac-

terized as a complete failure, given the slow adoption rate of such a clearly superior product.

## **The Challenge**

Apple has two problems. Not only is its sales and marketing structure less effective than it could be, but as it increases its success, it increases the burden on the support infrastructure that Apple provides for its users. At a time when even governments are outsourcing, Apple is providing ever more services directly to end users with .Mac, AppleCare, PowerSchool, a yet to be revealed Music Service and free in-store training. Even direct sales of Xserves to enterprise customers does not always make sense. Businesses operating at the cutting edge expect direct manufacturer support, but they don't necessarily want or need sales exclusivity. Local resellers can provide more products, offer a broader unbiased view of the marketplace, and cover more physical ground than any one corporation can hope to accomplish. A manufacturer who cannot find success using resellers needs to look at itself to find the problem.

Resellers choose to support the manufacturers that support them and demonstrate a competence and understanding of reseller challenges. The more Apple goes it alone, the weaker its long-term success will be. Apple's reseller strategy has revealed a desire to land big box retailers only. This is a strategy where one pursues hitting a grand slam, but never takes the time to load the bases. Big retailers and small resellers are in a constant tug-of-war between offering great service versus lower prices, competence versus convenience. I love the Apple Stores, but in many ways they combine the worst of both worlds. It would be a much better use of employees and financial resources to support dealers and resellers. The extra margin that is earned by selling direct is nothing compared to the multitude of lost opportunities at the local resellers store. Sales through a dedicated high rent vehicle like the mall stores simply transfers any extra direct sale profit margin through to the landlord. Trying to grow market share with the Apple Store comes at the expense of profits and simply antagonizes and stresses the existing small loyal reseller network.

All business is about relationships. Apple, to its credit, wants to keep a close relationship with its customers. Undoubtedly, these close relationships help it to understand the needs and wants of users. But in the long term, Apple must let go of the end users and support the resellers. That is in the best interest of both Apple and the end users. Distribution must be based on a pyramid. The world wide web is strong, and has changed the world in many ways, but the method of delivery for all goods, just like an assembly line, is through a pyramid shape distribution system. No revolution can challenge common sense.

## **Panther and Beyond**

Very few people recognize how radically Mac OS X challenges computing. The Apple user base is comparatively small, the OS X converts is some sum less than that, and even the ones who use it everyday do not comprehend all the shifts that have occurred behind the Aqua interface. Chances are, only the developers realize what is truly occurring. If all the Windows lemmings were to suddenly come to their senses, Apple would be ill equipped to handle them. Developers need Apple's whole-hearted support, and support of small businesses to open up the marketplace for their products.

## **Historic Parallels & Democratic Values**

History is full of examples of geniuses whose inventions have changed the world for the better, but whose companies failed to take full advantage of their market position. The Digital Revolution will come, regardless of whether Apple software dominates the market. Robert Goddard launched the first rocket, but it was a different propulsion system that took men to the Moon. He refused to share his science, so others followed the vision using a different roadmap. In the fast-paced world of computers, the same scenario may well play out for Steve Jobs and Apple Computer if they continue under this business model.

There is another reason, more important than money, why Apple should adjust its business model. As the recent Justice Department case against Microsoft demonstrated, we live in a world where even the United States

Government does not necessarily have the financial resources to engage a legal battle with this monopoly. This is a frightening historical development, and Apple provides the only marketplace challenge to this epic battle between democratization and centralization.

Computers of the modern world intersect at the crux of humanity, culture and freedom, more than any other product. With only Linux and Apple to provide an alternative to this unhealthy dominion by one company, the debate over which operating system is better is moot if one has a 95% market share. As the analysis of the three legs of Apple showed, breaking a conglomerate into separate divisions can actually make the company stronger. When the oil company monopoly was broken up, the seven resulting companies were stronger for it. For this reason, Microsoft split off the Mac Business Unit, and it is clear with the recent sale of Connectix, that this strategy has paid off.

Given world events, it may seem odd to suggest that Apple and Steve Jobs are a bulwark for our freedom. If you look up at the stars, you see both our past and our future. Likewise, if you look at countries around the globe, you can see how our nation may evolve. Every society has strong economic powerhouses, but allowing Microsoft exclusivity in technology invites folly for all mankind. It is not that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation cannot do some good for the world, or that Steve Jobs does not already have more money than he can spend in his lifetime, but concentrations of power constitute risk. Apple is the accidental standard bearer of a cultural revolution, and should come to terms that it has more than a fiduciary responsibility to achieve success. The Board of Directors should reflect that commitment. Its affair with the consumer is more than just a strategic marketing mistake.

## Heroic Virtue

Apple may well be guilty of the same heavy-handedness as Microsoft. Hopefully this is a reflection of stress caused by the business model. Writing software applications that compete with developers and opening stores to compete with resellers is also likely to shrink the developer base and marginalize the need for the platform at all.

It has been a long time since a killer application has been brought to the market for either platform. The most recent were the free internet browsers, and secondarily the personal audio and video applications of the digital age. By providing these tools for free, Apple walks at the edge of alienating developers to gain the end-user sale. Apple tries to control everything and at the same time expects to please everyone. This is not a reasonable compromise. As a Software Engineer and a Hardware Manufacturer, Apple should focus solely on supporting developers and resellers through its great operating system.

Resellers and developers represent honest and hard-working partners whose collaboration is of mutual benefit. By respecting relationships with both of these groups, the Apple market share will grow by itself. Apple's ad campaign recently spotlighted fearless free thinkers who trusted in the love and good will of the average individual and of the community. Apple needs the courage to Think Different about itself, and to change its business model to include the entire computer marketplace community. The Apple Stores will eventually collapse of their own weight, horrific customer relations, and a dysfunctional business model. And while some obvious problems are easily fixed, the stores could be very valuable as the backbone of a new dealer/developer support network. The Steve Jobs / Apple business model reveals a petty side of human nature, "its all about me." With the highest pay, the coolest stuff, and a string of successes, Wall Street affirms to Steve Jobs that his revolutionary delusion is real, all the while it protects the dominion of Microsoft. If this revolution is to be won, it can't be won by repeating past strategies on a larger scale. **Think Different is a great slogan, the heroic next step is to Act Different.**

## 2. APPLE MUSIC: SINGING OUT OF TUNE

Monday, 05/05/03

If you have spent any time at all with the new Apple Music service, chances are you are disappointed. I am, my iBook-toting daughter is, and chances are if it ever gets to the PC world, the other 97% of computer users will be too.

Apple claims it is a revolution. If it is, it is a counter-revolution. With 200,000 songs from a vault of 20+ million, the grand wizards of the musical clans have played Steve Jobs as a fool. Apple has put up the cash, lent its credibility, and created a wonderful technology, but the music industry has only allowed access primarily to the junk in the cut-out bins. And reportedly, the music company gets 65 cents per song. So who is the real winner here?

And don't plan on cherry-picking this sparse collection. Not all the albums available are complete. If you ever wanted that one great song, like Loan Me A Dime by Boz Scaggs, it is conveniently missing from the album, even though most of his collection is available.

The cynic in me suspects that the new codec technology will end up being the digital rights management tool of the future. And worse, if this model fails, the music cartels will use the failure as reason for more stringent digital rights controls. A clever sabotage followed by a self-fulfilling example as proof.

Steve Jobs stated, "Napster showed us that the Internet was made for digital music delivery." Actually, what Napster proved is that "supply and demand" is not working at all. There is a huge pent-up demand for music, and the prices are out of line with people's appetite. Providing songs at 99 cents maintains the record companies stranglehold on both the artists and their fans.

If Apple really believed in a revolution as they are touting it, instead of aligning with the record companies, they should have aligned themselves with the independent music producers and portals like cdbaby.com. Had Apple introduced Apple Radio, they would be streaming a world of underappreciated music to the masses. Revolutionary? A revolution would provide a direct payment link between the artist and the listener, and circumvent the music cartels. And the music would be purchased via the radio and be affordable, like pennies per song.

Artists are disgusted with the music industry and some have actually stopped recording, or are promoting themselves. By providing a direct link between the artist and the listener, established artists would come on board as soon as their contracts allowed them. The entire digital rights conflict would be rendered moot because the gatekeepers would be impotent. That is the revolution music fans are waiting for.

\*\*\*This was my first essay at mymac.com, and it caught the eye of Shaun King of YourMacLife.com Radio show. (The name of his show may have been different then.) Anyway, he promptly named me "Bozo of the Week," because of these crazy figures I was quoting, etc. I didn't know then that any criticism of the

mothership was strictly verboten.

When I found out about the “Bozo of the Week” bit I exchanged a few e-mails with him. I needed him because my facts were correct, and he invited me to be on his show. We had a pleasant conversation and I have a terrible radio voice.

His knee-jerk reaction was the first of many to follow both at Mac websites and at other websites/forums.

### 3. AN INTERPRETATION OF THE UNKNOWN

Friday, 06/06/03

I have a theory of the physical universe that makes perfect sense to me, but I suspect is incorrect. With a little luck, maybe a physicist will read this someday and explain the pieces that I left out. Here goes: All the energy in the universe existed at the moment of the Big Bang. But as we know, energy is being consumed all the time. The sun and the stars are burning, and these energy sources generate other energy sources, so energy is in a constant state of regeneration. Trees become coal, which generates heat, which generates electricity, and so on. So while man has never been able to harness perpetual energy, perpetual energy has been a constant state since the Big Bang.

Energy experiences this regeneration over time. Or, time is created by the regeneration of energy. Time of course is as real in this moment, as it was in the previous moment, as it will be in the next moment. A rock is a rock is a rock. But, when this moment passes, where did the rock and the time of the previous moment go? And what brought the rock and recognition of the past into the future? The past, which was the consumed energy of that moment, becomes the spacious void of the expanding universe. In other words, it is not the universe expanding, but the constant accumulation of time/energy. Think of past time is a non-measurable solid, and it is filling the universe, forcing it to expand.

The more time passes, the more energy gets regenerated, the bigger the universe gets. Since time creates more space inside of the ever-expanding universe, space, time, and energy are all inter-related. But beyond these impossible to measure physical characteristics, there is also consciousness.

All living things posses a consciousness. There was an article at Wired.com the other day that suggested that bacteria have a group consciousness. Given the common reproductive path of a fertilized egg for all living things, it is reasonable to assume that we share common characteristics.

If everything existed at the moment of the Big Bang, then everything that exists is energy. So a question like "How much does a memory weigh?" makes sense, even though we are not nearly intelligent enough to answer it.

So it is possible that even if we assume consciousness is energy and energy has a mass, then a memory has a mass and can be measured. But getting a physical reading of a memory or consciousness, really doesn't explain what this consciousness is.

This implies that even beyond the physical universe that my theory attempts to explain, there is also another, completely different, sentient dimension that science cannot even begin to explain, much less measure. Time is real, even though we can't explain it. We measure time passing, but time itself cannot be defined. Likewise energy is a force that we measure but cannot explain. We can explain heat as the rapid vibration of particles, but this just measures the process of regeneration, it neither explains where the energy came from or where it went. Time and Space are the logical voids that energy fills, but consciousness is still something different.

Feelings for instance, are distinct from consciousness and pain. The pain from a cut can be explained by investigating nerve endings, and feelings may be triggered by pheromones, but that doesn't explain what the feeling actually is, or what consciousness is, but surely they are more than just some type of chemical energy coursing through the body. This conversation is real, and ideas expand inside the mind in the same way time expands into space. Measuring a brain is not the same as measuring an idea or the depth of consciousness. There is something going on that is beyond the abilities of science to measure.

Animals and insects clearly have skills and capacities that humans lack. A human is no more capable of standing in a forest for 200 years than a tree is capable of building a city. Dogs can hear and smell things that a human is unaware of. Our gift of consciousness and our physical make up serves our needs; as do other gifts serve other living things. Humans have dominion over the living world, but we are not necessarily superior to it.

In the great stretch of time that the universe has been known to exist, humans have occupied only a small amount. So what has God been doing all that time?

Yes, God must exist. Perhaps there is an explanation for time and space, but there is none for energy and consciousness. Only God could put these parallel dimensions into motion.

To assume that God spent eons waiting on Earth-bound humans seems more than mildly egocentric. It is more likely that the universe abounds with life, and that this energy of life is at different stages throughout the universe. Life follows a cycle of birth, growth and death. We see it in people, in stars, in societies. There is no reason to not assume it is everywhere. Our physical universe itself may be following this same cycle. The Earth's Armageddon will occur with the collapse of our star. Life and energy will continue in other parts of the universe.

We all have a personal Armageddon. All our lives will all expire long before the sun burns out. So what then happens to our consciousness? Given the interplay between energy, time and space, it is reasonable to assume that our consciousness continues forward as well. This is yet another hint that God must exist.

With so much unknown but clearly present, what are we to make of this existence? Binding us all together in this mystery is Love. Love is yet another non-measurable phenomenon of the physical world. Consciousness and Love are different things. We all have capacity to love and hate, and as we experience growth, what we love and hate changes. Oftentimes, what we love and hate is colored by fear and anger and isolation. That is the real challenge in life, to find the capacity to Love everyone, everywhere.

Science and technology are a maze for the human civilization to occupy itself with, while each individual busies himself with a personal journey of exploration. If God exists, then clearly he expects us to find a way to Love one another and build a society of justice.

The tools of the modern man make this task of Love and justice no easier or harder than times past. Ultimately, it relies on making children wiser earlier. If the children are not wise, then we cannot expect them to be wiser as adults. This is what I meant by saying humans are not superior to other living things. For all we can tell, other living colonies may have perfected the society we struggle to attain. Humans as a

species, constantly writes off generations and groups of people by stealing their hope, dreams and security.

We are all subject to life's capriciousness, what I like to refer to as "a monkey in a tree." This odd description comes from a television documentary I once saw. An innocent young monkey was climbing joyfully in the crown of a rain forest when he was snatched by an eagle, crushed, dismembered, and fed to the predators' young. We are all monkeys in a tree. We are preyed upon by catastrophe, bad luck, disease and our own stupidity.

If you were to stand in an uninhabited Earth forest for millions of years with all types of scientific instruments and taking all sorts of measurements regarding wildlife, weather, etc., what are the chances that you would discover that you were making coal beneath your feet? Mankind's approach to our existence has often followed a similar misdirection. God has revealed little of His mystery, but He has revealed some. He has communicated the 10 Commandments, and when that was too confusing for mankind, He clarified His position: Love Me and Love one another. Evidently the non-scientific, non-measurable is the most important thing of all.

Like Plato's wall, all life is a reflection of other life. The cycles, the expansion, the dimensions, all compliment and mirror each other. This pattern of life repeats itself again and again. How Black Holes fit into this view of the universe, I fear to think about.

## 4. OF LIFE, DEATH, AND LIVING...AND THE DIXIE CHICKS

Monday, 06/02/03

If you had to make a choice between killing to protect what you believe is right or dying to protect what you believe is right, which would you choose? What would you rather do: kill or be killed? Forget about instinct, cause and effect, friends and family. All things being equal, and with a positive result for what is good either way, which person are you? Dead or alive? Martyr or hero? If push comes to shove, which Commandments do you follow? Do you feel more comfortable choosing your fate or deciding the fate of another? Would you Kill First or Die First?

Soldiers, of course, have no choice. As part of an army, they must protect their nation held dear. Their job is to kill rather than to be killed. Firefighters, on the other hand, run into burning buildings. They have obviously made a choice to be willing to die and have no need to decide to kill. Police officers have a slightly different situation. They have both the authority and the need to kill under specific circumstances, and live with the risk that they may be killed every day.

Ordinary people also have choices. While not apparently between life and death, they choose between their own common sense of right and wrong. In choosing between right and wrong in a democracy, the fundamental choice is actually between Kill First or Die First. What might appear to be misty shades of grey, perceived common sense, and party politics, is simply a lazy way of thinking. If you consider the fundamental difference between Kill First and Die First consciously, then the political choices that must be made for the good of the nation are more obvious. Most everyday decisions are not immediately life threatening, but by pursuing a deeper understanding of what our political choices are, we can realize that every decision we make is life threatening. Both Kill First and Die First choices must be chosen for a society to protect and better itself, but they must be made at the proper time and for the proper reason. Either choice selected to an extreme puts a nation at risk.

People have different interests and skills, and they are at different stages of personal growth when they vote. Wisdom, and the skills of critical thought, are acquired over time, but a democratic society allows all of its franchised citizens to vote without any qualifications. As a result, everyday issues and everyday choices are made by most citizens without too much critical thought.

With such a large swath of a society uninterested or unable to recognize the importance of its vote, how does a democratic society successfully make the careful choices between life and death, between Kill First and Die First? Most citizens do not take the time to read or think deeply on any one subject. More often than not, their decision and judgment is clouded by how it affects them financially. Clear speaking and clear thinking from a moral foundation is the duty of intellectuals and citizens alike.

If most votes can be characterized as misty grey lazy thinking, then is there a way to separate these choices into a black and white that ordinary people can use in everyday life? Most elections should be an 80/20

landslide because there is a clear answer available to most questions. If a problem is recognizable, then there should be an agreeable commonsense answer to solve it. Close elections are a clear sign of lazy thinking, and this has characterized our politics for far too many years.

The recurring challenge for the future is whether intellectuals have the courage to speak plainly and loudly to dispel the grey mist of lazy thinking. In many troubled societies, intellectuals are often targeted first for annihilation because they represent an ideological challenge to the usurping powers. Even in societies known for free speech, intellectuals often are eclipsed by the loud volume of partisan and parochial interests. In America, and throughout the world, intellectuals need to find the everyday courage of the soldiers, fire fighters and police officers to risk life and death for what they believe is right.

When the intellectuals of a society have been eliminated, all that is left are the two extreme partisan wings. Conflicted societies fall into a cycle of civil war that is very difficult to exit. Columbia, Northern Ireland, Algeria are all examples of this vicious cycle. Intellectuals find both a middle ground and shed a new perspective on political positioning. The American media has grown to value spin more than substance, posturing more than platforms. There needs to be more analysis in the mainstream media, or there is no point to free speech. The web is an opportunity for new voices, but it is as a poor substitute for intelligent public discussions.

On a personal level, there is only one correct answer to the question posed originally: One must be willing to sacrifice, to Die First for the greater good, otherwise there can be no greater good. The selfless example of Christ is not beyond mankind's ability to duplicate. Socrates drank the hemlock to demonstrate the folly of the lazy grey-thinkers. Mobs will always exhibit a willingness to destroy what they cannot understand, and power mongers will always be uncomfortable with the existence of critical thinkers. The Commandments and Christ's example clearly prove that it is always better to be Die First rather than to Kill First.

For a government and a society to protect itself however, it recognizes situations where it must be willing to Kill First, and likewise to make errors in that calculation. Protection of the innocent cannot be the only cause of action, sometimes risking the innocent is a cost factor in Kill First/Die First too. Nevertheless, protecting the innocent should be a high priority in any truly democratic society.

In using Christ and the Commandments as an answer to the original question, this analysis seems to challenge the Muslim tradition, because these events are outside of their history. But, other religions have also come to the same conclusion that it is better to Die First than it is to Kill First.

The ideological difference between Kill First and Die First can be generally regarded as conservative and liberal. Conservatives are more likely to choose to kill first, whereas liberals are more likely to choose to die first. The Dixie Chicks are subject to mob anger for challenging a president who chose to Kill First rather than take any chance waiting. This is an example of how a lazy grey-thinking conservative public mob forms. After 9/11 the president rose to protect innocent Muslims and our country from devolving into chaos, but criticism of himself, whether on the Bill Mahr show or by the Dixie Chicks, is a different story. He led the attacks on Bill Mahr and was deafeningly silent regarding the attacks on the Dixie Chicks. He demonstrated the sad attributes of both a power monger and a conservative.

Equally sad is the interplay between conservatives and liberals and the war machines. Liberal and conservative does not necessarily mean Democrat and Republican, but rather those who choose to Kill First and those who choose to Die First. The Christian choice is to Die First.

Consider the army of the al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants are clearly conservatives. They demonstrate a willingness to kill for their version of the greater good. They wrap themselves in a Muslim robe of piety, and convince the liberals that they should be willing to die for the greater good. What we see as a suicide bomber are the actions of a stupid liberal being manipulated by a conservative. The conservative risks little and gains much, because of his willingness to Kill First.

In a normal society, the suicide bombers might well have been a soldier, a fire fighter or a police officer, because they have demonstrated a power to think beyond themselves and a willingness to sacrifice themselves. Of all the events surrounding 9/11, this is the most puzzling. Those nineteen men, filled with both hate and sacrifice, who spent years planning their death for the greater glory of God, never left the lazy grey haze of everyday thinking. Like Judas, they have betrayed everything holy, but 9/11 was as pre-ordained as Christ's betrayal. It is part of a fabric that we cannot understand. How does God judge them? Is a willingness to Die First in the Muslim religion not the same as a willingness to Die First in another religion? Yes, they killed others in their death, but isn't that exactly what our victor celebrates when the war we choose to start is over? We all become our adversary when we choose to kill him. Which act of aggression as self-defense counts as the first one?

Christianity stops the vicious cycle of kill-or-be-killed by turning the other cheek, it doesn't matter who the adversary is, or what brought about the rage. It is too much to ask a nation to turn the other cheek, it must protect its borders and its society, but it is not too much to ask its people to turn the other cheek. The crisis in the Catholic Church is an example of the people being wiser than its leaders. Rather than turning away from the church, many parishioners demonstrate a forgiving spirit and are fighting for a return to the courageous moral virtue that the leadership must embody.

The battle between the West and the Arab worlds is an old story. However, the polarization seems to have grown immensely in recent years. There is a hardening of positions in the Muslim world and they have a deeper understanding of our Western habits. In an irony they are not likely to appreciate, Muslim extremists are using western tools of science to organize and propagate themselves, and like most true believers, they use each piece of their Western knowledge and twist it to fit their philosophy of Kill First. Consider these passions from an al Qaeda training manual:

*To those champions who avowed the truth day and night...And wrote with their blood and sufferings these phrases...*

*The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates... Platonic ideals..., nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.*

*... Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful*

*solutions and cooperative councils. They are  
established as they [always] have been  
by pen and gun  
by word and bullet  
by tongue and teeth*

These people are hateful and angry, but they are not crazy. They have consciously chosen to reject our Western reason. Their handbook may not be very different from our own soldier training manuals. They do not want to engage the West in a logical debate of the issues. They are as convinced of their God's righteousness as we are of ours. They reject any claim that implies an intellectual debate with us is useful. Where we see democracy and separation of church and state as the path to individual freedom, they see it as ruin. For them, the individual is secondary.

In this context it is curious that Bush did not choose to debate Saddam Hussein. What was to be lost by calling Saddam's bluff? Bush could have suggested meeting at the United Nations or in Geneva. What are the odds that the real Saddam would show up?

The Muslims see the pen, the word, and the tongue as the intellectual tools for educating themselves. For convincing the West there is the gun, the bullet, and the teeth. The farcical debate Hussein offered provided a forum to speak to the Muslim world, and explore our common moral visions. Given the considerable resources we expended attacking him, what was to be lost by speaking to him?

Muslims are conflicted. The Socratic method is not American; it is thousands of years old. By rejecting everything American, they must also reject all the gifts of humanity that much of mankind embraces. The grey mist of their lazy thinking is a thick soup of contradiction. The above passage represents both an understanding of logic and a fear that logic will undermine their reasons for an Islamic revolution. There is this other complaint from the same al Qaeda training manual:

*After the fall of our orthodox caliphates on March 3, 1924 and after expelling the colonialists, our Islamic nation was afflicted with apostate rulers who took over in the Moslem nation. These rulers turned out to be more infidel and criminal than the colonialists themselves. Moslems have endured all kinds of harm, oppression, and torture at their hands.*

After the World Wars, the West carved up the Mid-East to serve its parochial purposes. While that is an ancient and remote history to Americans lost in a wasteland of consumption and new technology, in the slower-paced Muslim world it is an open wound. Consider how the American South still struggles with segregation and equality one hundred forty years after the Civil War, and it is easy to understand why the Mid-East is the way it is today. The children there are indoctrinated with the conservative choice to kill first, be they Westernized, Jew or Muslim.

In the moments after 9/11, America had a unique historic opportunity to speak to the world and define both ourselves and the common ground of our humanity. It was a moment where the decision to choose to

kill or be killed was most poignant. Muslims did not want to believe that it was an action of Muslim faith that carried out the attack. The attack was the conservative choice to Kill First carried out to a grotesque extreme. Many Arabs enjoyed with guilty pleasure that America had finally gotten some payback.

Rather than challenging the path of mankind, and reiterating the American example, President Bush chose instead the lazy conservative view that he should decide the fate of others, and that Christianity and America is better served by killing. Rather than finding the difficult solution through peace and self-sacrifice, it would be more of the same from the conservatives. He followed the path of all the recent Republican administrations, including setting up new strong-arm leaders to quash the Muslim resistance.

The American message to a world beset with religious hate was expressed by our first president. In a visit to the first synagogue in America, Washington stated:

*May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants--while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid.*

*May the father of all mercies scatter light, and not darkness, upon our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in His own due time and way everlastingly happy.*

Our agrarian society of the 17th Century has grown and prospered because of a simple recognition of moral choices, and the courage to make them. The wisdom to choose peace in a world divided by religious hate has made us prosperous.

A Commander-in-Chief cannot take the oath of office and turn the other cheek when attacked, but the American President can speak to greater aspirations of our humanity than this president does. As a conservative, he made the choice long ago that to Kill First was the best response. In fact, his use of the word kill was so prevalent that his wife had him strip it out of his speeches during the aftermath of 9/11. The Secretary of Defense, in describing the Iraqi opposition, exhibited an eerie glee when describing how our military will kill the opposition. The President's pompous ceremony marking the end of combat in Iraq with a grand entrance upon an aircraft carrier reveals his lust for glory, disrespect for human life, and a naive view of the tragic circumstances of war. He is comfortable with the killing, and is very proud that the American military machine was able to kill the leadership and its army without great loss of civilian lives. But had the military technology not been there, he would have proceeded nevertheless.

The greatest weapon of a powerful nation is restraint, something Israel practices everyday by not attacking its hostile neighbors. By rushing into war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush has squandered our best opportunity to engage a Socratic debate with the Muslim world. There are centuries of infighting among the Muslims, far worse than the racism that scars the American experience. There will be no peace in these historic lands without a courageous new leadership of ideas. While the al Qaeda may fear a debate based on logic, many Muslims may accept the challenge of a new idea if it is presented properly.

Sixty years ago the American people helped save the world from the hate of Nazism and fascism. Forty years

ago President Kennedy toured the world to a warm and loving audience. What has happened in the last forty years that America would be the object of such scorn and hatred?

The answer is the ascendancy of a conservative political power and foreign policy in the presidency. The wise soldiers Eisenhower and Kennedy were replaced by the spiteful and hateful Nixon. Nixon, who had made a career out of damaging our democracy, gave legitimacy to mob hate by holding hearings with Joseph McCarthy investigating his definition of anti-American behavior. As president, he continued to hold a view as narrow as the al Qaeda and Muslim fundamentalists that we fight today. Together with Kissinger, Nixon set-up a police state in the Mideast to ensure our free flow of resources. Two years after the scheduled end of his administration, Iran fell to the fundamentalists. The Machiavellian wisdom of the Kissinger foreign policy failed miserably to maintain either peace or dignity in the Mideast. Our excursion into Vietnam is another tragic example of a conservatives' willingness to Kill First.

The next conservative president, who as Governor of California presided over the prosecution and intimidation of those who would exercise their free speech to protest the Vietnam War, replaced the other soldier-president Carter. Reagan's ascendancy was a gift from the stupid liberal Democrats, and specifically from John Anderson and Ted Kennedy, who destroyed the opportunity for a kind, decent and gentle man to lead our nation for a second term. Given Reagan's involvement in the Hollywood blacklisting which was part of Nixon's anti-American crusade, it is no surprise that today Hollywood is more politicized. Today's neo-conservatives complaints about the political involvement of Hollywood stars are nothing but hypocrisy.

The West has been wrestling with rising Islamic fundamentalism and oil supply issues since Nixon and Kissinger's Mideast strategy was implemented. While Carter was the first victim of this strategy, other presidents have likewise been subject to the stress it has caused. Where Carter recognized that the strategy's only chance to work was with an Arab-Israeli peace accord, all the conservative presidents have followed Kissinger's plan to protect the West's oil supply interests by maintaining our client states. Having Kissinger lead an investigation into the causes of 9/11 was worse than having the fox guard the hen house. The hens had been slaughtered, and the fox was investigating the murder.

Following Reagan, we had the well-connected lazy thinker Bush Sr. as President. The oil issue is driven by Western avarice, and this original American family shows all the signs of the corruption of wealth. In the same way that Osama bin Laden is a spoiled billionaire's son with a penchant for lazy conservative ideas, the same could be said for this First Family. As a sitting Vice-President, Bush had one son who was the president of the government's largest savings-and-loan bailout, Silverado in Colorado. Another son, as governor of Florida, was too cheap to pay the duty tax on jewelry purchased in Bermuda, and tried to smuggle them back to the U.S. undeclared. The current President Bush was so mature at age thirty that he got a DUI while his father was the Director of the CIA. In fact, it seems to be one of the disabilities of great wealth that successive generations, be they liberal or conservative, are often lazy thinkers, with a lust for power.

What was truly refreshing about the Clinton administration was that it proved that someone from a broken poor family with the skill of critical thinking can rise to the top in our democracy. While money corrupts our politics, the value of free speech and the free exchange of ideas is still alive in this experiment. If citizens understood the greatness of and the frailty of this one fact, then they would all vote at every election.

Of course, watching the investigations of the Clintons based on a tenuous connection to a savings-and-loan, when the previous president's direct relationship with a gigantic failure was not investigated, is enough to turn many a stomach away from the political process. The investigations of Clinton were an abuse of power driven by the Republican controlled congress and conservative thinkers. It was no different than the disingenuous search for communists that took place years earlier. Voting should not be about pocket-book issues or about attacking others; it should be about building a better society in which we all will live. The peace process that Carter started crept during the following conservative Reagan years. The Muslim hate was still there, as Lebanon proved. Our quick exit from Lebanon and later Somalia exposes the conservative unwillingness to Die First to serve a greater good. Bush's mixed signals to our then ally Iraq led to the invasion of Kuwait and to the American bases in Saudi Arabia, which further provoked the Muslim fundamentalists.

The American response to 9/11 has been the same as our response to Vietnam: Catch and Kill. It is no surprise we lost the war in Vietnam. Our adversary understood the profound difference between Kill First and Die First. The self-immolation practiced by the Vietnamese was a sign of understanding and wisdom. Die First would not stop us from entering and destroying their villages and killing their innocents. Die First was an example of how to live even under the most stressful of circumstances.

Christ's example is not unique to Christianity. Sacrificing the innocent and sacrificing yourself are the costs of Die First, and of turning the other cheek, whereas protecting the innocent is the intended goal of Kill First. Dramatic moral decisions can only be made during stressful times. Conservatives always select the expedient and self-serving Kill First choice whenever confronted with a difficult decision. Conservatives are immoral by their very nature.

The challenge for the West is that our Muslim adversary has a strategy that contains both Kill First and Die First elements. By using the young and the stupid liberals, the conservatives have found a way to achieve their aims by abusing their ideological opposites. This is an ingenious co-opting of an opponent. They destroy both their adversary as well as their own potential challengers in the same attack. In the same way that despots annihilate intellectuals, this strategy isolates and removes spirited individuals from their own midst.

Al Qaeda used 19 box cutters to wreak devastation on 9/11; we cannot underestimate the cleverness of this adversary. The dead Die First hijackers were exactly the type of individuals to lead the Muslim revolution into a new direction. Bin Laden's description of Mohamed Atta as "the pious one" pointedly reveals the difference between he who would Die First and he who would Kill First. Unlike the Stalinist 5-Year Plans, the al Qaeda five-year plan was successful. Most of our best intelligence has come from suicide attackers who had a change of heart and were able to think clearly. Five years is a long time, and the track record of the al Qaeda is a stunning success. Our best defense is to battle for the hearts and minds and the moral high ground. Without mutual respect from Arabs, the West will not find peace.

Long term, the strategy of Catch and Kill will fail again because it simply increases the power of conservative thought. The more conservative thought is accepted, whether in the West or in Islam, the worse the world situation will grow. For it to stop, there must be a resurgence of intellectuals and liberal ideas. 9/11 marks a high point in self-serving conservative hate.

The al Qaeda menace will not be defeated with American might alone. In the same way the Ku Klux Klan and the Mafia can only be resisted through the cooperation of insiders, so too will it be necessary for Arabs to help resist the poison in their culture. It is not enough to audit, eavesdrop and strong-arm, the Arabs must be part of the solution to the excesses of their own conservative culture.

America has a growing neo-conservative movement which is made up of self-described “born-again” believers. These Christian warriors believe in Kill First. A more accurate description of these people would be the “unborn,” since they are dead to the true spirit of Jesus Christ. Rather than understanding Christ’s example, they wrap themselves in piety in the same way that Islamic fundamentalists do. They care only for those who agree with their point of view, all others are infidels whose fate they feel empowered to decide. This is why we see murders of abortion doctors and scorn from the demonstrators at clinics. If they were Pro-Love, they would be working to help people in a difficult situation, rather than passing judgment on them. The zealots of the Christian Right are every bit as dangerous as the al Qaeda, the Ku Klux Klan, and an Un-American Activities Committee. There is room for law-abiding hateful believers in a freedom loving democracy, but not in positions of responsibility or majority.

The net effect of Republican presidencies is that the neo-conservatives are escalating the battle with the Muslim conservatives. The arms race is now a hate race. American conservatives have dragged the world into a chaos of their own making, and it seems to be getting worse, as the fractured coalition for the Iraq War shows. It is quite ironic and sad that Newt Gingrich lambasted the State Department’s diplomatic efforts recently. First, he led the rise of the conservative power in Congress. Second, he was attacking Colin Powell, who like other soldier leaders, seems to understand and respect the Kill First / Die First choices. Third, he is probably not a neo-conservative, but his attack will strengthen their hand in the Republican Party, and further diminish chances for peace in the world.

A fair characterization of American politics for the past forty years is that the Democrats are stupid. Democrats increasingly focus on pocket-book issues and abandon hard moral choices. But the Republicans are dangerous. Their philosophy was never moral. That does not mean one party is always right and the other party is always wrong. Every choice is made uniquely. In general, the Republican choices are conservative and immoral whereas the Democratic choices are liberal and moral.

Our best future lies in a return to the fundamental morality and courage that this country was founded upon. The founding fathers were both intellectuals and radicals, and their actions were tempered with both a respect for God and for each other. In an agrarian age of comparative difficulty, they set an example of honesty, mutual integrity and clear thinking. We have engaged in a great many wars during our brief history, including a great Civil conflict regarding the freedom and dignity for all our people. The forces that would choose to enslave a people, force children to work long hours in factories, and build sweatshops on foreign shores, are all one and the same. Avarice, hate, and legal racketeering are the hallmarks of tyranny, be they American or Muslim or of a British king. As a nation of laws, we have the opportunity to correct our misdirection peacefully, but the stakes are still the same. To gain liberty, the majority must have the willful courage to sacrifice themselves in ways great and small. To Die First.

Lincoln, Kennedy, and Martin Luther King all stand as modern examples of liberalism. Their deaths

were greater terrorist acts than 9/11. These men did not live and die for the petty goals of free enterprise, unchecked wealth, or glory. They lived and died to build a future of freedom for all mankind. As Americans, our great forefathers left us a wonderful gift: The Power To Vote. There will never be enough great leaders or great thinkers. There will never be a shortage of problems, but that is no reason for despair. Every American is empowered. Vote. Vote Liberal. Demand more, both of yourself and of your representatives. **Your vote is a revolution.**

## 5. REVIEW - IPOD 15GB

Friday, 06/13/03

iPod 15GB

Company: Apple Computer, Inc.

Price: \$399.00

<http://www.apple.com>

This 15 Gig iPod review is just like all the others you have read. It can be summed up in two words: Buy One!

I saw my first iPod about a week after it was introduced. It was at a seminar on OS X Server and someone in the audience had one. I got to hold it for about 10 seconds. Techno-Lust. It must be what Segway owners go through everyday. We all gathered around this new marvel from Apple.

I have had serious misgivings about the iPod. I was worried about the disk size, the battery life, the durability and sticking ear-buds in my ear. When I played with them at the Apple store, the interface seemed clumsy, and I never liked the squared corners. Wow, did I miss the big picture! The price is a killer, but it is worth every penny.

The new iPods are technologically mature. The corners are round, the drives are spacious, it has a dock for an easy power charge, and a few games for when you are really bored. I still don't like ear-buds, but it works just fine with regular headphones too, and the ear-buds travel more easily. The Bose Noise Canceling Headphones are next on my wish list. I think that combination will calm my audiophile lust. Oh, and the interface that I thought was clumsy in the store, the new button controls have taken care of that. The iPod comes with a 54 page user manual, but in a few uninterrupted minutes you can master the controls without reading them.

My only complaint is that there is too much cable. The remote controller is on a separate three foot piece which attaches to the ear-buds. This leaves too much cable for spontaneous entanglement. I'd rather the control just drop into the center of my chest, like it does on my cheap Radio Shack headphones. When you attach the remote to the ear-buds, which are four feet in length, you end up with seven feet of cable. I do not understand the logic of this at all, since the controller is now four feet from the ear-buds, which is considerably longer than most peoples reach. The Radio Shack headphones are six feet long, with the controller at the 18" spot, and the six foot length is usually long enough when at the gym or laying in bed. It's too bad too, because the Radio Shack only controls the volume, where the Apple remote controls volume, pause/play, and next/previous. On the plus side, the remote works with the Radio Shack headphones as well. So if you do not mind having extra cable, you can have the best of both worlds, a better controller and your favorite headphones.

Speaking of laying in bed, I really wish I had an iPod when I was in the hospital for a week last fall. If there was ever an environment for an iPod, this is it. I was starved and bored. Storing and changing CD's is a nightmare under those sparse accommodations, and more so when you are sore after surgery. My wife thought I was nuts. She would bring in ten CD's and I would want twenty-five more. By the end of the week I had a gym bag full. Except for not being allowed to eat (including water,) I enjoyed my time listening to music and talking to my room-mate Louie. (You will never understand how good hospital-issue Strained Cream of Asparagus Soup can taste, until you have had nothing pass your lips for five days.

Delicious!) iPods should be standard issue with an intravenous, it would comfort a lot of patients to have their choice of music.

Figuring out what to store on the iPod is a challenge if you have a huge music collection like I do.

Fortunately, when I bought my 60GB PowerBook I had already decided what would make the cut. The house tower has a (not full) second internal 120 GB drive to hold music. I managed to select only 14.5 GB of it for my PowerBook, which is 7.5 days worth of music. Dumping that playlist to the iPod didn't go as smoothly as I would have hoped, since the 15 GB iPod actually only holds 13.9 GB, so I had to pare the list some more. Other than that, the process went smoothly.

I should point out that I did not buy my 15 GB iPod, it was a "gift" from Apple. About six months ago, they denied me AppleCare service on my iBook because of a clerical error. After a lot of ranting, screaming, and raving, I was finally heard. My iBook was repaired, and I cancelled all my AppleCare contracts. Since there was a formula problem in issuing me full refunds, I was given a partial refund and graciously offered an iPod. (Thank you, Jacquie!)

Music forms the bookends of our lives. There is no better invention for making your music collection portable, except for maybe your laptop. The Walkman is good, the iPod is insanely great. Buy one, you will not regret it.

## 6. RAIN AND THE RHINOCEROS (BY THOMAS MERTON)

Monday, 06/09/03

Introduced by Steve Consilvio

It is 2:00 AM and the morning's early hour weighs heavily upon my eyes. I can hardly keep them open. I type with a newly revived energy, watching my words unfurl on the lonely glow of my artificial sun. I have discovered with a few quick clicks a lost old friend, an essay both remembered and forgotten from my freshman year. Many times I have sought it out, only to fail again and again. This evening, while putting my middle child to bed, we spoke at length as we often do. The rain of this long holiday weekend rapped casually upon the roof. I told her how whenever I hear the rain, I think back to my long lost friend, "Rain and the Rhinoceros." She laughs, puzzled, "What does a rhinoceros have to do with rain?" I can't explain, it is lost in a grey fog of memory that goes back over twenty years.

Some time later, PowerBook on my lap, I type "rain rhinoceros" into Safari's google window. In a wireless moment, links to my long lost friend appear. I recognize instantly that my long search will soon be over. A third investigative click brings me the full text of the long lost article. I am overjoyed. I read the first paragraph aloud to my unsuspecting wife. She has no idea that I have reconciled with my long lost friend. She smiles and affirms its sentiment. She asks if I wrote it. Flattered, I say, "No, this is the article I have been searching for all these years." Surprised, she asks, "How?" "I don't know" I say. "I just typed it in, and suddenly it appeared. Maybe I never searched here, I don't know, I know I have before. I can't remember when last, but finally someone has posted it."

I read it first as a freshman in my first and only semester of business college. It was part of a whirlwind few months of love and growth and discovery. I left that college to become an English major and a writer, a degree that instead became History. And my writing was lost to a life of commerce and everydayness. Almost two years ago, I bought an iBook, my fifth or sixth Mac, but my first laptop. It changed my life. Freed from my desktop, computing and curiosity merged with convenience. Projects long abandoned were reborn. Eighteen months later, a 12" PowerBook upgrade was needed. Since its arrival, I have rekindled the flame to write. It is all I truly want to do, despite all the irons in the fire that I must attend to.

Here, in its entirety, is a masterpiece. A few simple words that were among a small select group that changed my life. I bow my head in thanks for its rediscovery. For its author, it is a small work of a prolific volume of prose. If only we could live so long to share all our wisdom and insights with each other, then how truly complete life would be. The circumstance of my original discovery can not be repeated, but perhaps you will find in it your own special joy, as it has given me. Undoubtedly, if it is new to you, it will make you richer in some small way.

The rhinoceros is a reference to a play, where the characters turn into a thick-skinned unthinking herd, charging blindly ahead. I suspect I understand this essay much better now than when I first read it. The SAC is the Strategic Air Command...keeper of the nuclear weapons.

## **Rain and the Rhinoceros by Thomas Merton**

LET me say this before rain becomes a utility that they can plan and distribute for money. By “they” I mean the people who cannot understand that rain is a festival, who do not appreciate its gratuity, who think that what has no price has no value, that what cannot be sold is not real, so that the only way to make something actual is to place it on the market. The time will come when they will sell you even your rain. At the moment it is still free, and I am in it. I celebrate its gratuity and its meaninglessness.

The rain I am in is not like the rain of cities. It fills the woods with an immense and confused sound. It covers the flat roof of the cabin and its porch with inconsistent and controlled rhythms. And I listen, because it reminds me again and again that the whole world runs by rhythms I have not yet learned to recognize, rhythms that are not those of the engineer.

I came up here from the monastery last night, sloshing through the cornfield, said Vespers, and put some oatmeal on the Coleman stove for supper. It boiled over while I was listening to the rain and toasting a piece of bread at the log fire. The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor. Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling the gullies and crannies of the wood with water, washing out the places where men have stripped the hillside! What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in the forest, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges, and the talk of the watercourses everywhere in the hollows!

Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants, this rain. As long as it talks I am going to listen.

But I am also going to sleep, because here in this wilderness I have learned how to sleep again. Here I am not alien. The trees I know, the night I know, the rain I know. I close my eyes and instantly sink into the whole rainy world of which I am a part, and the world goes on with me in it, for I am not alien to it. I am alien to the noises of cities, of people, to the greed of machinery that does not sleep, the hum of power that eats up the night. Where rain, sunlight and darkness are contemned, I cannot sleep. I do not trust anything that has been fabricated to replace the climate of woods or prairies. I can have no confidence in places where the air is first fouled and then cleansed, where the water is first made deadly and then made safe with other poisons. There is nothing in the world of buildings that is not fabricated, and if a tree gets in among the apartment houses by mistake it is taught to grow chemically. It is given a precise reason for existing. They put a sign on it saying it is for health, beauty, perspective; that it is for peace, for prosperity; that it was planted by the mayor's daughter. All of this is mystification. The city itself lives on its own myth. Instead of waking up and silently existing, the city people prefer a stubborn and fabricated dream; they do not care to be a part of the night, or to be merely of the world. They have constructed a world outside the world, against the world, a world of mechanical fictions which contemn nature and seek only to use it up, thus preventing it from renewing itself and man.

OF course the festival of rain cannot be stopped, even in the city. The woman from the delicatessen scampers along the sidewalk with a newspaper over her head. The streets, suddenly washed, became transparent and alive, and the noise of traffic becomes a plashing of fountains. One would think that urban

man in a rainstorm would have to take account of nature in its wetness and freshness, its baptism and its renewal. But the rain brings no renewal to the city, on to tomorrow's weather, and the glint of windows in tall buildings will then have nothing to do with the new sky. All "reality" will remain somewhere inside those walls, counting itself and selling itself with fantastically complex determination. Meanwhile the obsessed citizens plunge through the rain bearing the load of their obsessions, slightly more vulnerable than before, but still only barely aware of external realities. They do not see that the streets shine beautifully, that they themselves are walking on stars and water, that they are running in skies to catch a bus or a taxi, to shelter somewhere in the press of irritated humans, the faces of advertisements and the dim, cretinous sound of unidentified music. But they must know that there is wetness abroad. Perhaps they even feel it. I cannot say. Their complaints are mechanical and without spirit.

Naturally no one can believe the things they say about the rain. It all implies one basic lie: only the city is real. That weather, not being planned, not being fabricated, is an impertinence, a wen on the visage of progress. (Just a simple little operation, and the whole mess may become relatively tolerable. Let business make the rain. This will give it meaning.)

THOREAU sat in his cabin and criticized the railways. I sit in mine and wonder about a world that has, well, progressed. I must read Walden again, and see if Thoreau already guessed that he was part of what he thought he could escape. But it is not a matter of "escaping." It is not even a matter of protesting very audibly. Technology is here, even in the cabin. True, the utility line is not here yet, and so G.E. is not here yet either. When the utilities and G.E. enter my cabin arm in arm it will be nobody's fault but my own. I admit it. I am not kidding anybody, even myself. I will suffer their bluff and patronizing complacencies in silence. I will let them think they know what I am doing here.

They are convinced that I am having fun.

This has already been brought home to me with a wallop by my Coleman lantern. Beautiful lamp: It burns white gas and sings viciously but gives out a splendid green light in which I read Philoxenos, a sixth-century Syrian hermit. Philoxenos fits in with the rain and the festival of night. Of this, more later. Meanwhile: what does my Coleman lantern tell me? (Coleman's philosophy is printed on the cardboard box which I have (guiltily) not shellacked as I was supposed to, and which I have tossed in the woodshed behind the hickory chunks.) Coleman says that the light is good, and has a reason: it "Stretches days to give more hours of fun."

Can't I just be in the woods without any special reason? Just being in the woods, at night, in the cabin, is something too excellent to be justified or explained! It just is. There are always a few people who are in the woods at night, in the rain (because if there were not the world would have ended), and I am one of them. We are not having fun, we are not "having" anything, we are not "stretching our days," and if we had fun it would not be measured by hours. Though as a matter of fact that is what fun seems to be: a state of diffuse excitation that can be measured by the clock and "stretched" by an appliance.

There is no clock that can measure the speech of this rain that falls all night on the drowned and lonely forest.

Of course at three-thirty A.M. the SAC plane goes over, red light winking low under the clouds, skimming the wooded summits on the south side of the valley, loaded with strong medicine. Very strong. Strong enough to burn up all these woods and stretch our hours of fun into eternities.

AND that brings me to Philoxenos, a Syrian who had fun in the sixth century, without benefit of appliances, still less of nuclear deterrents.

Philoxenos in his ninth memra (on poverty) to dwellers in solitude, says that there is no explanation and no justification for the solitary life, since it is without a law. To be contemplative is therefore to be an outlaw. As was Christ. As was Paul.

One who is not “alone,” says Philoxenos, has not discovered his identity. He seems to be alone, perhaps, for he experiences himself as “individual.” But because he is willingly enclosed and limited by the laws and illusions of collective existence, he has no more identity than an unborn child in the womb. He is not yet conscious. He is alien to his own truth. He has senses, but he cannot use them. He has life, but not identity. To have an identity, he has to be awake, and aware. But to be awake, he has to accept vulnerability and death. Not for their own sake: not out of stoicism or despair—only for the sake of the invulnerable inner reality which we cannot recognize (which we can only be) but to which we awaken only when we see the unreality of our vulnerable shell. The discovery of this inner self is an act and affirmation of solitude.

Now if we take our vulnerable shell to be our true identity, if we think our mask is our true face, we will protect it with fabrications even at the cost of violating our own truth. This seems to be the collective endeavor of society: the more busily men dedicate themselves to it, the more certainly it becomes a collective illusion, until in the end we have the enormous, obsessive, uncontrollable dynamic of fabrications designed to protect mere fictitious identities—“selves,” that is to say, regarded as objects. Selves that can stand back and see themselves having fun (an illusion which reassures them that they are real).

SUCH is the ignorance which is taken to be the axiomatic foundation of all knowledge in the human collectivity: in order to experience yourself as real, you have to suppress the awareness of your contingency, your unreality, your state of radical need. This you do by creating an awareness of yourself as one who has no needs that he cannot immediately fulfill. Basically, this is an illusion of omnipotence: an illusion which the collectivity arrogates to itself, and consents to share with its individual members in proportion as they submit to its more central and more rigid fabrications.

You have needs; but if you behave and conform you can participate in the collective power. You can then satisfy all your needs. Meanwhile, in order to increase its power over you, the collectivity increases your needs. It also tightens its demand for conformity. Thus you can become all the more committed to the collective illusion in proportion to becoming more hopelessly mortgaged to collective power.

How does this work? The collectivity informs and shapes your will to happiness (“have fun”) by presenting you with irresistible images of yourself as you would like to be: having fun that is so perfectly credible that it allows no interference of conscious doubt. In theory such a good time can be so convincing that you are no longer aware of even a remote possibility that it might change into something less satisfying. In practice, expensive fun always admits of a doubt, which blossoms out into another full-blown need, which then calls

for a still more credible and more costly refinement of satisfaction, which again fails you. The end of the cycle is despair.

Because we live in a womb of collective illusion, our freedom remains abortive. Our capacities for joy, peace, and truth are never liberated. They can never be used. We are prisoners of a process, a dialectic of false promises and real deceptions ending in futility.

“The unborn child,” says Philoxenos, “is already perfect and fully constituted in his nature, with all his senses, and limbs, but he cannot make use of them in their natural functions, because, in the womb, he cannot strengthen or develop them for such use.”

Now, since all things have their season, there is a time to be unborn. We must begin, indeed, in the social womb. There is a time for warmth in the collective myth. But there is also a time to be born. He who is spiritually “born” as a mature identity is liberated from the enclosing womb of myth and prejudice. He learns to think for himself, guided no longer by the dictates of need and by the systems and processes designed to create artificial needs and then “satisfy” them.

This emancipation can take two forms: first that of the active life, which liberates itself from enslavement to necessity by considering and serving the needs of others, without thought of personal interest or return. And second, the contemplative life, which must not be construed as an escape from time and matter, from social responsibility and from the life of sense, but rather, as an advance into solitude and the desert, a confrontation with poverty and the void, a renunciation of the empirical self, in the presence of death, and nothingness, in order to overcome the ignorance and error that spring from the fear of “being nothing.” The man who dares to be alone can come to see that the “emptiness” and “uselessness” which the collective mind fears and condemns are necessary conditions for the encounter with truth.

It is in the desert of loneliness and emptiness that the fear of death and the need for self-affirmation are seen to be illusory. When this is faced, then anguish is not necessarily overcome, but it can be accepted and understood. Thus, in the heart of anguish are found the gifts of peace and understanding: not simply in personal illumination and liberation, but by commitment and empathy, for the contemplative must assume the universal anguish and the inescapable condition of mortal man. The solitary, far from enclosing himself in himself, becomes every man. He dwells in the solitude, the poverty, the indigence of every man.

It is in this sense that the hermit, according to Philoxenos, imitates Christ. For in Christ, God takes to Himself the solitude and dereliction of man: every man. From the moment Christ went out into the desert to be tempted, the loneliness, the temptation and the hunger of every man became the loneliness, temptation and hunger of Christ. But in return, the gift of truth with which Christ dispelled the three kinds of illusion offered him in his temptation (security, reputation and power) can become also our own truth, if we can only accept it. It is offered to us also in temptation. “You too go out into the desert,” said Philoxenos, “having with you nothing of the world, and the Holy Spirit will go with you. See the freedom with which Jesus has gone forth, and go forth like Him—see where he has left the rule of men; leave the rule of the world where he has left the law, and go out with him to fight the power of error.”

And where is the power of error? We find it was after all not in the city, but in ourselves .

TODAY the insights of a Philoxenos are to be sought less in the tracts of theologians than in the meditations of the existentialists and in the Theater of the Absurd. The problem of Berenger, in Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, is the problem of the human person stranded and alone in what threatens to become a society of monsters. In the sixth century Berenger might perhaps have walked off into the desert of Scete, without too much concern over the fact that all his fellow citizens, all his friends, and even his girl Daisy, had turned into rhinoceroses.

The problem today is that there are no deserts, only dude ranches.

The desert islands are places where the wicked little characters in the *Lord of the Flies* come face to face with the Lord of the Flies, form a small, tight, ferocious collectivity of painted face, and arm themselves with spears to hunt down the last member of their group who still remembers with nostalgia the possibilities of rational discourse.

Where Berenger finds himself suddenly the last human in a rhinoceros herd he looks into the mirror and says, humbly enough, "After all, man is not as bad as all that, is he?" But his world now shakes mightily with the stampede of his metamorphosed fellow citizens, and he soon becomes aware that the very stampede itself is the most telling and tragic of all arguments. For when he considers going out into the street "to try to convince them," he realizes that he "would have to learn their language." He looks in the mirror and sees that he no longer resembles anyone. He searches madly for a photograph of people as they were before the big change. But now humanity itself has become incredible, as well as hideous. To be the last man in the rhinoceros herd is, in fact, to be a monster.

Such is the problem which Ionesco sets us in his tragic irony: solitude and dissent become more and more impossible, more and more absurd. That Berenger finally accepts his absurdity and rushes out to challenge the whole herd only points up the futility of a commitment to rebellion. At the same time in *The New Tenant* (*Le Nouveau Locataire*) Ionesco portrays the absurdity of a logically consistent individualism which, in fact, is a self-isolation by the pseudo-logic of proliferating needs and possessions.

Ionesco protested that the New York production of *Rhinoceros* as a farce was a complete misunderstanding of his intention. It is a play not merely against conformism but about totalitarianism. The rhinoceros is not an amiable beast, and with him around the fun ceases and things begin to get serious. Everything has to make sense and be totally useful to the totally obsessive operation. At the same time Ionesco was criticized for not giving the audience "something positive" to take away with them, instead of just "refusing the human adventure." (Presumably "rhinoceritis" is the latest in human adventure!) He replied: "They [the spectators] leave in a void-and that was my intention. It is the business of a free man to pull himself out of this void by his own power and not by the power of other people!" In this Ionesco comes very close to Zen and to Christian eremitism.

"IN all the cities of the world, it is the same," says Ionesco. "The universal and modern man is the man in a rush (i.e. a rhinoceros), a man who has no time, who is a prisoner of necessity, who cannot understand that a thing might perhaps be without usefulness; nor does he understand that, at bottom, it is the useful that may be a useless and back-breaking burden. If one does not understand the usefulness of the useless and the

uselessness of the useful, one cannot understand art. And a country where art is not understood is a country of slaves and robotsÉ.” (Notes et Contre Notes, p129) Rhinoceritis, he adds, is the sickness that lies in wait “for those who have lost the sense and the taste for solitude.”

The love of solitude is sometimes condemned as “hatred of our fellow men.” But is this true? If we push our analysis of collective thinking a little further we will find that the dialectic of power and need, of submission and satisfaction, ends by being a dialectic of hate. Collectivity needs not only to absorb everyone it can, but also implicitly to hate and destroy whoever cannot be absorbed. Paradoxically, one of the needs of collectivity is to reject certain classes, or races, or groups, in order to strengthen its own self-awareness by hating them instead of absorbing them.

Thus the solitary cannot survive unless he is capable of loving everyone, without concern for the fact that he is likely to be regarded by all of them as a traitor. Only the man who has fully attained his own spiritual identity can live without the need to kill, and without the need of a doctrine that permits him to do so with a good conscience. There will always be a place, says Ionesco, “ for those isolated consciences who have stood up for the universal conscience “ as against the mass mind. But their place is solitude. They have no other. Hence it is the solitary person (whether in the city or in the desert) who does mankind the inestimable favor of reminding it of its true capacity for maturity, liberty and peace.

It sounds very much like Philoxenos to me.

And it sounds like what the rain says. We still carry this burden of illusion because we do not dare to lay it down. We suffer all the need that society demands we suffer, because if we do not have these needs we lose our “usefulness” in society-the usefulness of suckers. We fear to be alone, and to be ourselves, and so to remind others of the truth that is in them.

“I will not make you such rich men as have need of many things,” said Philoxenos (putting the words on the lips of Christ), “but I will make you true rich men who have need of nothing. Since it is not he who has many possessions that is rich, but he who has no needs.” Obviously, we shall always have some needs. But only he who has the simplest and most natural needs can be considered to be without needs, since the only needs he has are real ones, and the real ones are not hard to fulfill if one is a free man!

THE rain has stopped. The afternoon sun slants through the pine trees: and how those useless needles smell in the clear air!

A dandelion, long out of season, has pushed itself into bloom between the smashed leaves of last summer’s day lilies. The valley resounds with the totally uninformative talk of creeks and wild water. Then the quails begin their sweet whistling in the wet bushes. Their noise is absolutely useless, and so is the delight I take in it. There is nothing I would rather hear, not because it is a better noise than other noises, but because it is the voice of the present moment, the present festival.

Yet even here the earth shakes. Over at Fort Knox the Rhinoceros is having fun.

# 7. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 1 OF 8:

## (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Friday, 06/27/03

### **The Nature of Man**

Everyday we all sleep, everyday we all awake. Welcome to this day. Life is a trinity of the past, the present, and the future. While both great and terrible events may await us, everyday is greeted anew. Whether we live a life of routine, boredom, power, responsibility, frivolousness, crime, naiveté, youth, struggle, illness or hate, before we step into the routine of our daily life, there is a vague general sense that what we want lies somewhere before us in the future. Yesterday's accomplishments are in the past, today is the work-in-progress for a realization that resides in the future.

This trinity of time is bound up in Hope, and cuts across all social and economic classes. It has no boundaries of religion or country or culture, it is beyond technology and mechanization and any point in societal development. Modern man and cave man, prisoner or free, young and old, Hope is both instinct and conscious choice. Even in depression, most individuals cannot fight the sense of Hope that envelops our humanity and our lives. To be alive, is to Hope.

Much has been written regarding the nature of man. Is he good or evil? Clearly he has the capacity to choose, and history is full of both inspirational and tragic tales of individuals who have made both choices. If the nature of man can be discerned, it is that he is full of Hope. But hopeful of what?

The answer can only be Love and Peace. We awaken each day to a hopeful sense that we can both Love and Be Loved in a completeness and glory that we have never known before. Hope is not about organizing the physical world, defeating our competitors, or any type of measurable success. Hope is internal. It is a lust for more of that which feeds our spirit and comforts us. No matter how distorted ones politics, regardless of the rage in ones heart, beyond the ego, the id, and self-esteem, Love and Hope lie at the center of man's nature.

Love and Hope also triggers the biological clock, which builds cities and societies, and motivates passions and culture and ideas. Hope is also the sense that everything we do is probably wrong, but somehow it will work out in the end. There is an undercurrent of reconciliation in Hope. A desire to forgive and forget others actions, and a desire that all our own actions will be forgiven and forgotten. If Life is a trinity of time, Hope is a break with the past. It is a revolution through progression. A repetition of everyday events, that somehow land us in a new world. A willful evolution.

### **Utopia**

Wisdom tempers Hope. It is the reluctant understanding that not all things can or will be accomplished in our lifetime. Wisdom tells us things as they are is one of many historical conditions, despite our hope for something better. Many see a utopia as a dream, and history has shown little promise for utopian hopes. Utopias seem to exist in the faraway future of poems and the lazy histories of failure. Most people see utopias at odds with the very nature of man, when he is defined as either good or evil. Too many people see utopia as something they might gain in their death.

While men are both good and evil, it is our nature of Love and Hope that defines our humanity. We all believe in

a utopia, but not necessarily consciously. It is the belief in a utopia that gets us up in the morning, and with what we greet each new day. When man is defined as a vessel of Love and Hope, he can move through goodness and evilness easily. His actions are based on his wisdom and his strength, not on his nature. Utopia is not a world where everything is perfect, nor a world where every man is perfect. A utopia is a world where the Love and Hope for each individual can be realized on his own timetable, when he is ready. Utopia is not shared wealth, it is a shared consciousness that is progressively re-learned by each generation.

American Democracy is a utopian ideal. It promises Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness through free enterprise and individual freedoms as protected by the Bill of Rights.

Utopian ideals flow through all religions, but the practical implementation of a utopian society is anything but perfect. Oftentimes, the sword is used as a tool of enlightenment or to commence its inception. Peaceful utopian attempts are predicated by the congregation removing itself from the greater society, establishing a commune, and showing by example that man can have the courage to live anew. Both approaches attempt to achieve their utopias by exclusion. The former excludes non-followers, the later excludes themselves from non-followers. Wealth, money, and the control of property often focus as both the illness and the solution for a utopian-minded reform. For America it is the right to private property, for communists it is a worker-controlled state, for smaller communes it is common property. In all cases, property or wealth is seen as the critical adjustment required to achieve a more perfect society. Even those who take a vow of poverty, like Buddhists and priests and nuns, find denying possession of material things as the sign of their enlightenment. These individuals actively pursue an utopian ideal, and their focus on Love and Hope begins with a denial for property.

This is a strange juxtaposition. America is a great experiment and a beacon of hope in the world, but at the same time its legal structure guarantees and fosters the ownership that utopian idealists find most troubling: Private property.

There has always been great concentrations of wealth in history, America is not unique. If America is a great utopian experiment, its greatness cannot be the free enterprise system, or the self-interest of entrepreneurs. America is great because it opens its arms to the everyday aspirations of humanity, to Love and to Hope. Since personal wealth is the first item rejected by utopian activists, American greatness must stem from our freedom to speak, to think, to communicate. Our willingness to reinvent ourselves is the source of our strength. Our inventiveness stems from having the ability and the time to pursue a myriad of interests. Lust for gold and self-adornment may generate pyramids, but mankind's greatest accomplishments are neither technological nor grand, they are simple and wise, and feed our spirit with Love and Hope. The quality of a society is best measured by the quality of its philosophy. America was built on the democratic ideals practiced thousands of years ago, and thrives from the growing maturity of that wisdom.

Love and Hope are not political dogmas, intellectual choices, strategic positions or material goods. Love and Hope are emotions. They are our humanity. It is shared equally with the strong and frail, young and old, rich and poor, creative and ignorant, moral and immoral.

Americans of today have a challenge left to us from the founders of the country, and by the other great leaders that followed them. In most cases, Americans have no blood link to these American ancestors. We are a nation of immigrants, attracted to these shores by the same yearnings of our humanity. **It is our collective responsibility and duty to continue this brave experiment, to match the forces of hate and ignorance with the forces of wisdom and patience, to vigorously protect and seek the utopian ideal.**

## 8. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 2 OF 8:

### (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Monday, 06/30/03

#### **The Lord's Prayer: Puzzle or Prescription?**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer above states: Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. God obviously has control of both Heaven and Earth, so what do the words "Thy will be done on Earth" describe? His will in Heaven must be perfection, so maybe perfection on Earth is the destiny of mankind as well. Perhaps this is the centerpiece of our Hope and our humanity. Contrary to conventional wisdom, perhaps the long stretch of mankind's miserable history actually reveals a utopian society in the making, a return to the Garden of Eden.

Thousands of years ago, the masses were enslaved to build the Pyramids. Thousand of years after that, they built the Great Wall. Feudal times saw the growth of monarchies and peasant farmers. And we have just recently evolved to a mechanized society. Workers have had a comparatively easier life as time has passed. There have been conscious attempts to redistribute wealth, and bodies of laws and systems of government have emerged to provide nominal protections for the weak against the strong. Widespread education has provided more opportunities for everyone. Perhaps, in an ironic twist of fate, it is the fruit of knowledge that will return us to Eden, with Apple technology as the centerpiece of our modern renaissance.

#### **Mutual Responsibility**

So, what is next in our evolution towards an utopia? How do Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness and private property square with the utopian notion of Hope, Love and shared wealth?

The slave-holding of the past has evolved, slavery has been progressively decentralized. Rather than the single Pharaoh enslaving a nation, or the multiple feudal kings holding serfs, in our nation, individuals owned slaves. The legal basis of slavery is part of our recent history. Modern law continues to act as a shield to protect the latest vestiges of slavery. Modern slavery is camouflaged by the cultural pride of self-reliance and the legal rights to private property.

Workers create wealth, but have little control over the property or the process. Corporations have become the slaveholders of the modern age. Congress is comprised mainly of white male millionaires, the same group who controlled plantations 150 years ago, who value corporate relationships as the source of their wealth. Economic progress is often defined by the economy's ability to generate new millionaires. We have not moved very far along the continuum from slavery to utopia in thousands of years. The Twin Towers,

and modern skyscrapers everywhere, can be seen as current day pyramids, built by the backs of modern world corporately-owned slaves.

Utopia transcends the petty goal of ownership of property. Its goal is a shared consciousness of human values, where everyone has the opportunity to work at a fulfilling life. The point is not to agree about every issue, but to value the same concepts of justice, fair play, duty and morality. That is the paradox of work and wealth. A utopia is not a place where work is not necessary, it is a place where work is fulfilling. Likewise wealth is not a utopia. Wealth may release one from the need to work, but the lack of struggle and fulfilling work robs the wealthy of both Hope and wisdom. Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness is more complex than the accumulation of wealth. This was understood years ago, it is less recognized today.

*“Our greatest happiness in life does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed us, but is always the result of good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.”*

*- Thomas Jefferson*

To create a utopian society, the goal of unchecked wealth must be muted, and work becomes a fulfilling mixture of duty and personal opportunity. All work has dignity, but the system should allow workers to grow personally and advance into new opportunities. Unchecked wealth requires a system where human labor must produce profitable returns. No other criteria are measured. Workers have only two choices, work as a machine to generate profits for someone else, or do the spiritual work they prefer, and sacrifice the pay. In a utopia, this burdensome choice is lessened. If poor people can make sacrifices for “just pursuits,” then why can't corporations as well?

The quest for private wealth causes and then perpetuates many social ills. Seldom do politicians seek out a solution to a problem based on its merits, rather, they represent the narrow interests of selfish constituents. Selfishness has few limits. All matter of resources will be expended to ensure the right to keep money, to ward off competition, and comparatively little to ensure that the social and cultural effect of a decision is wise. Where the Founding Fathers were broad thinkers, our representative's interests have becoming increasingly narrow.

Corporate greed under the American model is a given because the current system requires and encourages corporations to make unchecked wealth their only goal. If wealth is the only goal in a society, then the pressure to maintain some form of slavery will inevitably continue. If the laws of society were to require and encourage justice, fair play, and duty, then that is what the society will value most highly. Non-Profit corporations have a different goal than For-Profit corporations, but they function just as efficiently, and face the same logistical and organizational challenges. There has been no improvement in healthcare since it was converted to a for-profit model. Greed is not a substitute for fearless wisdom and Hope. Consider how our laws regarding equality have changed since the slaves were freed. Violent racism has subsided, but the greed that spawned it originally continues unabated. America has the momentum of utopian social goals, but every new generation must live up to the challenge of its responsibility.

There are three groups in the world: freedom-lovers, slave-masters and worker-slaves. These groups can

be either individuals or businesses, and usually any one entity is a combination of all three. Few of us are perfect, few of us are evil. **Our current laws reflect the strain between two opposing goals: unchecked wealth and a society of justice.**

## 9. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 3 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Friday, 07/04/03

### **Historical Stalemate**

Legal evolution is slow because the worker-slaves are too busy working to focus or fight to change the system. Their position as worker-slaves highlights their inability to challenge the system. The seeds of revolt, ironically, are often planted by the wealthiest. Most revolutionaries come from the middle and upper classes. They are the ones with the time resources and self-confidence and education to challenge the status quo. The slave-masters are convinced their actions are just because society requires the goods and services they produce, but their children often see a world of indulgence. The first generation uses the system to be successful, but some of the following generations try to change the world. Buddha was among the first to resist the life of luxury. The bourgeois planted the seeds of the Russian Revolution. The Rockefeller's, the Kennedy's, and Osama bin Laden are all from families of great wealth. The easy life of tennis, lounging by the pool, and polishing expensive autos was as boring 4000 years ago as it is today. The inner voice of Hope that we all share speaks louder to some than it does to others, but not all revolutionary utopians are peace-loving and wise.

Despite our modern world and its preceding 4000 years of history, we are losing sight of our utopian vision. We now define ourselves based on numbers written on a piece of paper and filed in a drawer. If our bank balance shows \$0 we are sad, if it shows \$1,000,000 we are happy. When we go to a hospital, if we have the correct numbers written on the paper, all tests are given and special care and consideration to our ailments. If, however, we do not have the correct numbers written on a piece of paper, we are at best patched up and released. Future ailments, chronic problems, known but not immediate issues are ignored. The infrastructure to deliver healthcare waits ready and able, the investment in training and capital has all been made, but without the correct numbers on a sheet of paper, you do not get the best chance for a healthy and pleasant life. Without wealth, you are regarded as expendable, your pain less important, and your demise less sorrowful. In the slow march toward utopia, is this really the best that modern man can accomplish?

### **Free Enterprise**

Modern medicine is the result of thousands of years of knowledge, trial and error, and a multitude of experiments. Many approaches have been tried and abandoned over the course of time. Some mistakes are repeated, but revolutionary approaches have also changed the course of its practice. We all benefit when vigorous attention and high standards are applied to the art of medicine, and when we are all allowed access. Our economic life should be no different.

The free enterprise theory that grips our country fails to address either the primary concerns of civilization or proscribe a healthful remedy for justice. In 1776, Adam Smith wrote "The Wealth of Nations" extolling the marketplace as a mediator of competing forces. The Founding Fathers set in motion a social revolution with the idea that all men are created equal. But the economic theory it was paired with has been proven to be completely wrong. The marketplace is a slave market, and what has changed over history is the way

the slave's laborers are bought and sold. The alleged free hand of capitalism is a theory that parallels the healthful effect of bloodletting by use of leeches. In the 18th century, Charles Darwin died as a result of this practice, despite his insight to scientific evolution. Free enterprise is a bloodletting of our moral soul, and America stands in the place of Charles Darwin.

Adam Smith stated:

*Among the savage nations of hunters and fishers, every individual who is able to work, is more or less employed in useful labor, and endeavors to provide, as well as he can, the necessaries and conveniences of life, for himself, or such of his family or tribe as are either too old, or too young, or too infirm to go a hunting and fishing. Such nations, however, are so miserably poor that, from mere want, they are frequently reduced, or, at least, think themselves reduced, to the necessity sometimes of directly destroying, and sometimes of abandoning their infants, their old people, and those afflicted with lingering diseases, to perish with hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts.*

*Among civilized and thriving nations, on the contrary, though a great number of people do not labor at all, many of whom consume the produce of ten times, frequently of a hundred times more labor than the greater part of those who work; yet the produce of the whole labor of the society is so great that all are often abundantly supplied, and a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order, if he is frugal and industrious, may enjoy a greater share of the necessaries and conveniences of life than it is possible for any savage to acquire.*

What we have seen in our brief history is the opposite of his characterization. We have generated a hundred-fold increase in provisions, and some consume the provisions of thousands, if not of millions. Yet we are increasingly “abandoning ... infants, ... old people, and those afflicted with lingering diseases, to perish.” The difference is that rather than abandoning people in the wild, we warehouse them in neighborhoods of poverty and blight, and let them slowly expire by the lonely glow of a television light, addiction, crime, ill health and pollution. The so-called savage nations were a more utopian community than ours. They lived with a respect for Hope and Love, and acted from a sense of communal duty. The Native American society was more balanced than ours, but they were annihilated by the armed warriors of reason and claimed Christianity. A common refrain regarding free enterprise is that a rising tide of wealth floats all boats, but for those struggling without a vessel or a life jacket, it is sink or swim. We have created a new worldwide slave class, and it is growing in numbers every day.

### **Moral Virtues**

The first moral choice of the American founders was the genocide of the native inhabitants. Our “civilized and thriving nation” followed a pattern as old as history. Our drive for property would not be checked by any adversary. Like the Egyptian Pharaoh, we considered ourselves god-like and superior. We have now used technology to cast a global shadow of slavery and self-adoration. As nations emulate the American economic success, they are bound to emulate our errors, too.

If mankind is on the long road towards utopia, and democracy provides the social framework for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, then changes need to be made to the free enterprise model to further advance our Hope. Since Hope is a shared consciousness, we all know the elements of utopian society.

### **What are the goals of our willful evolution?**

Since mankind cannot accomplish radical change without lethal force, another step toward utopia must be based on things which can be accomplished peacefully and which answer the most important of our basic needs. These things are two, both physical and spiritual: food and health, education and worship. Of course, in exchange for these gifts from society, the individual must work. In work, each must willingly provide these same gifts to others in society that he also accepts. The solution is a system of Mutual Responsibility regarding our most basic needs, and, it builds on our social experience in building government and worship communities.

### **The Four Cornerstones**

America has all the cornerstones in place for advancing our utopian beginning. Our nation is abundant in its food supply, we have a network of quality medical care, research and teaching facilities, we have public education through high school and a myriad of colleges and universities, and a body of law that vigorously protects ones freedom to worship. **The only thing that halts the progression to a more utopian society is the free enterprise model.**

# 10. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 4 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Thursday, 07/10/03

## **The Modern Society and our Agrarian Beginning**

Adam Smith described a system where some work little and receive a lot, while others work a lot and receive little. It did not take into account the plight of the slaves, accept perhaps as property, and is a model based on an agrarian society. Its primary analysis was an explanation of how commerce would prosper more effectively without a king as the primary arbitrator and hoarder of wealth. The king controlled everything, and claimed ownership to every item, even every apple on every apple tree. We have reached the same point today, except this time we are a modern society and the corporations have assumed the role of the king. Copyright law and the litigious nature of our society show how aggressive we have become to claim an equally perpetual ownership. As the small farm agrarian nation has receded, the federal government has driven an expansion of power in our private lives. The right to vote, to due process, and a great body of law have all served to both empower more people as well as enforce limits of individual power. With the rights that the government conferred, it also has grown in power. For every right it expanded, it has assumed the power to regulate. So as we as citizens have grown more accustomed to more power, we have also grown accustomed to a stronger do-all federal government, capable of both granting favor or imposing restrictions, based upon your point of view.

Industrial society has made our interdependency stronger, which in itself has become a source of power. Corporations lobby and drive our laws and priorities based on their self-interest. The plight of the worker and society in general is left as an afterthought. All legislative battles are between large corporations and the forces of the people at large, usually in the form of labor, smaller businesses or a specific industry, and the forces of the government interests.

In an agrarian society there was no national grid of power, transportation, communication, food, health care, banking, insurance, entertainment, news or distribution. In today's society, national enterprises are becoming more and more the norm. America is not homogenous politically, but it is culturally and economically. The power of the individual industries and companies has become equal to or greater than the power of the federal government.

Politically we have been long divided. Not simply democrats versus republicans, but city versus country, employees versus employers, industry versus conservationists, franchised versus disenfranchised. These oppositions are not singularly by chance, the free enterprise system perpetuates it. It is a "check and balances" that the founders envisioned. In an agrarian society, their vision and fear was the dominance of one state or a group of states over another region. The Civil War is a testament that their plan failed. Slavery was defeated in favor of the utopian ideals as stated in our founding documents: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. The free enterprise system was unable to arrive at a just solution then, and it is unable to arrive at a just solution now. Self-interest is not a utopian ideal. While its existence must be accommodated in a political solution, our economic ideals should be the same as our social ideals: utopian. For our social life we have the Bill of Rights. For our economic life we need a Bill of Mutual Responsibility. Relying on the alleged balancing powers of free enterprise, rather than articulated utopian principals, is what has perpetuated our economic divisions. For us to be effective, we need to break the vested interests from the cycle of wasteful priorities. The free enterprise system needs to be replaced by one of Mutual Responsibility.

## **Too Much Responsibility**

At some point, and some would argue it was long ago, the federal government will be doing more things than it can do well. The war on terror aggravates this situation. Likewise the states, lacking the resources of the federal government, are underpowered in this new nationally homogenous industrial society. With the rise of security concerns, two million citizens incarcerated, and a legal process that serves as an aggressive weapon, we are growing perilously close to losing the stability of the middle class. Much of the activity of our government serves the interests and the competitive nature of corporations. Eisenhower warned of the military-industrial complex, and his plea was ignored. A government of the people, by the people, for the people may well perish from the earth if the power of the modern day slaveholders continues unchecked.

Politically there are three main groups at play: corporations, labor and government. The political parties, for the most part, serve either labor or the corporations. The people have a vote, but within this framework it is diluted by those with greater resources. Since the political parties serve those with the resources to support them, the parties have come to resemble advocates for either the "Labor Corporation" or the "Industry Corporation." It is a battle between two narrow self-interests that leaves many Americans unrepresented.

Our social utopian ideal of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness can be seen as under attack by the free enterprise model. Self-government is being defined and executed on a national corporate scale. There is no local control, individual rights or freedom, independence of action or liberty. As we exit our agrarian society, we find ourselves controlled by an industrialized nationalized cultural and political power. It is an Orwellian system. Our destructive habits have more power than the players engaged in it. By "working the system" corporations are empowered to exclude those without resources from enjoying self-government, but they themselves are helpless to change the system. Many representatives leave Washington because they cannot bear to be a part of the system. For the wealthy, philanthropy is the only way to correct the system.

The novel 1984 was not about Big Brother deciding everything, it was about thought control and Doublethink. It was not enough that people live as slaves, it was required that they actually believe their slavery to be the best situation possible. It was death to a utopian vision for allegedly practical reasons. Specifically, that we should serve the model, rather than the vision. In this sense, we have all become slaves to free enterprise. This resulting form of slavery will be more complex to stop than by a war with muskets. We need to replace our entire legal infrastructure.

## **Back to the Beginning**

Any new utopian-inspired formula must also begin at the federal level, for it is there where all our wisdom, rights and freedom resides. But if checks and balances no longer work, then what will? The answer to motivated self-interest is mandated Mutual Responsibility. Self-interest, as the founders believed, is a power that can be harnessed. Voluntary duty to self-governance, which augured no critical consequence in agrarian times, needs to be mandatory in an industrialized nationalized society where resources are concentrated. There are many examples of mandated Mutual Responsibility that the government currently imposes, for example, pollution control and health codes. Free enterprise has no element of citizen duty.

What is required is an expansion of corporate responsibilities and a narrowing of corporate freedom. Rather than issuing unfunded mandates on the states, the government must issue corporate mandates to effect social responsibilities. The social burdens placed on government are caused by the failure of corporations to value anything other than profit. To relieve the burden on the government, corporations must be a partner with social responsibilities.

Government is experiencing a cyclical failure. It is too busy dealing with the problematical social effects free enterprise causes, and the Corporations resist any change in their philosophical responsibilities. Like the slaveholders of the past, the corporations will give up the right to unchecked immoral profit unwillingly. Unlike 150 years ago, this will not be an armed conflict between different regions of the country. We can accomplish this utopian change with a series of simple votes.

The objective is to find the balance where the government continues its natural expansion of personal rights, but simultaneously contracts in size and scope, and shifts many of its social burdens to these new industrialized national cultural private powers that the corporations have become. We can trust private industry to do what is good for itself, to be motivated. **What we need to do is grant them the power they have, but also extract from them a new Contract of Mutual Responsibility.**

# 11. INTERMISSION IN “FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA”

Friday, 07/18/03

## **Molly, Paul and me**

Well, I guess it is official. I now tell people that I am a writer, and that I have a column. This is a radically new self-image for me. Writing is something that I always wanted to do. Now I am actually doing it. I have held my tongue because I did not believe I could add anything useful to the debate. Now I think maybe I can add something of value.

Every time the teacher (that's you) chooses to, I get to have my work graded and read to the whole class (the web community.) My analogy does not line up quite right, but that doesn't matter, since I am now in charge. I am a Writer. I can put words in people's mouths, lie, act stupid, and break the rules of grammar. I am omnipotent. What is even better, I do not have to worry about my poor spelling or pronunciation. My wife is always razzing my language failures. I laugh. Einstein couldn't make coffee I tell her, of course, he did master the tools of his trade. Oh well. I sympathize a lot with the clod who is our President, his father's Vice-President, and all the embarrassing mediocrity that is the wealth of our humanity. If you can't laugh at yourself, then you end up crying about stupid things. I stand before you raw and exposed. So what. Does anyone really care? And what if they did?

None of this could have happened without Apple. So again, I owe them a debt of gratitude. Apple technology has really made my life immensely better, especially the laptops. I also love my new iPod, much more than I would have expected, even though I've had it for only a few weeks. Remember the commercial with the geek-thin kid who says he feels powerful? I know just how he feels. Of course, we all know how power corrupts.... Have you noticed I always do these weird personal introductions before getting to the meat of the essay? It seems to drive a lot of people nuts. I do it because I want to remind the reader to realize that an essay is just an idea written by one person at some specific moment in time. It is not perfect, or complete, or a definitive principle that will last forever. The printed word has no more authority over our life than a casually spoken word, but people fall into the trap of giving it more value. In the Bible, the only things that really matter are the Ten Commandments and Jesus' command to Love One Another. Everything else is just a man's exploration in understanding. It may be insightful, inspiring and divinely given, but it is just one man's account. If you read between the lines, you will find that the thing I write most about is Loving One Another. Separately from it being hard to practice all the time, it is also a difficult command to understand. I do believe it is a command we are all challenged to live.

Some people think writers should be objective. I AM NOT ONE OF THEM. Nope, I think the whole point of writing is to say something. It can be smart or stupid, but it damn well had better challenge the reader. My feeling is that it is better to be loud and wrong than quiet and right. If you look at how Congress operates, you know that is how life seems to work. Of course there are different genres of writing, and with some forms of writing or topics, it may be grossly inappropriate to challenge the reader. Fortunately, I am not writing in that genre, so you won't get much of that playing it safe crap from me. I didn't hold my tongue all these years so I could engage in blah-speak. In fact, I have already told my wife what I want my epithet to read: I tried my best, to be wise, funny and kind, now it is your turn. I want to challenge the reader even when I am dead and gone, like Philoxenos challenged Thomas Merton.

Some people do not get the chance to challenge others. Not because they did not want to, or because they were uninterested, but because they are murdered. This week, here in Massachusetts, the remains of Molly Bish were found. Molly was just a kid, sixteen years old, and working as a lifeguard, when she disappeared 3 years ago this month. Her family now has a small amount of closure in their well of grief, her bones to bury. The tormented soul who stole her life remains unknown.

We all know Molly. She is a friend, a daughter, a niece, and a neighbor. Her story is the chaos of our lives: the thing we do not want to happen. It is the car accident, the illness, the slip and fall that unmask the raw edge of our humanity. It is the cross we fear to bear.

We do not get to choose the burdens in our lives, they are thrust upon us. While some burdens are more tragic than others, no one escapes them. Burdens are a natural part of our humanity. Even if we get everything we ever wanted, time will catch up to our body and us will deteriorate. No amount of planning or wealth can create a burden-free life.

The Bish family has tried to use their pain wisely. During the last three years, they have advocated for children, promoted identification kits, and lived a public life of amazing strength despite their personal grief. They challenge parents and society to think and protect the children. They want to spare us all the pain and chaos they have had to endure.

Paul is a customer who came in to buy some t-shirts the other day. He had not been in for a long while, which is unusual for him. He works doing reach-out for a poor inner city neighborhood, trying to keep kids on the straight and narrow path. His work is not very different from that which the Bish's do to protect children.

I don't know Paul's personal history, or why he chose his career path. This time when he came in, he was wearing an ear bud. I assumed it was a radio or walkie-talkie or something, so I asked, "What are you listening to?" He told me that he was going deaf, and that it was a hearing aid. He couldn't afford to buy "real" hearing aids, but under the Americans with Disabilities Act, his employer (a community health center) had to accommodate his disability. They did so by purchasing this iPod like device sound amplifier.

Both my daughter and my mother wear hearing aids, so when he said he couldn't afford them, I knew what he meant. After wearing her original ones for seven years, my daughter had just replaced hers. Big bucks. I couldn't help thinking, again, isn't this an amazing economic system we have built? The burdens caused by a criminal or by our health are beyond our control, but how is it that Paul doesn't have hearing aids for both ears like my mother and daughter? There is plenty enough of chaos that we cannot control, but what about the chaos that festers which is man-made? Are we so unwise that we cannot solve an obvious inexpensive problem? Would we deny a blind man a cane, a crying baby comfort, or a hungry person food?

YES, YES, YES! We would do all types of similar things, almost by design. We create an artificial pecking order of pain. If your number comes up in the chaos lottery, you might get some help; if not, you are on your own. Since Paul's number did not come up, he does not get hearing aids. They are sitting on a shelf somewhere, unused.

The criminal who murdered Molly committed both a moral and an economic crime. Obviously the moral crime and loss of life is most important. The cost of the formal investigation, the volunteers search time, the media, the emotional chill that occupied us, and an economically productive life were all lost in her murder. The cost of any one part of this economic crime is many times greater than the cost of the hearing aids that Paul needs.

Paul's loss of hearing is part of the chaos of things that he doesn't want to happen. Compared to the Bish family, he is very lucky. In terms of planning, for both of them the chaos was an equally unforeseen event. When Molly went missing, the state directed all its resources to locating her, without too much regard to cost. For Paul, the regard for his problem was limited because of the cost. Obviously, a missing girl requires an immediate draconian response. As it is for a sailor lost at sea, the window of opportunity is short, and the more time passes the worse the situation. But did we really expect that no one would develop hearing problems this year? We know the rhythm of chaos, yet we ignore it.

My late sister won the chaos lottery. She developed kidney disease and worked for the phone company. Not only did she have great medical and disability benefits while she was sick, but the state of Massachusetts underwrites kidney illness. She was among the early long-term successes to receive a kidney transplant, and lived a preciously difficult 20 years with my father's organ inside of her. Her doctor was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for pioneering transplant technology. Everything that could be done for her was done.

In the hometown of the Nobel Prize winning doctor an intersection is named for him. This man, like Paul, spent his life working for the betterment of others. We should not name streets after people, we should name them after ideas and concepts, as a reminder that there is always a road or a path to our ideals, and that there is more than one way to get there. My sister's name was Grace, our society needs more grace. Be Graceful Boulevard is an address I would like to share with my neighbors. Let us meet sometime at the intersection of Love and Family.

So what of Paul and Molly? Paul probably won't be getting his hearing aids any time soon, and the Earth will soon swallow up our beloved Molly. We will start a new day, and a new battle with everydayness, and hope that the burden of chaos will pass over us again. There is so much fun stuff that we have yet to have, and chaos is so imposing.

In Voltaire's, *Candide* the character Pangloss would say, "Whatever is, is best." He was in an infinite loop, doing the same things over and over again. Whatever bad thing happened was okay, whatever good thing happened was okay. His role was simply to tend to himself, and wrap himself in a convenient fiction of morality, where no corrective action is ever necessary. Many people think like Pangloss, that if we take our own lumps magnanimously, then that frees us of a need to concern ourselves with another person's chaos. Love One Another is a command of inaction according to this interpretation.

Still, I weep for Molly, and I feel bad for Paul. Our bravado culture of self-reliance is a trap. The self-policing mechanism of free enterprise enslaves us to the same Panglossian stupidity and immorality. We are a community, or we are nothing. We cannot stop the chaos, but we can lighten its burden when it arrives. What we do for fear of death, we can do for life. To stand idle while chaos reigns is foolish and immoral.

I recently posted an essay called, *On Life, Death and Living...and Dixie Chicks*. Did you chance to read it? I describe conservatives as lazy thinkers and liberals as stupid. That would seem to imply that I must then be a know-it-all. I'm not, I just think our politics are at an intellectual and moral dead-end. No one is listening to the other speak, but both sides have plenty of good arguments. They must, since they swap sides on the issues constantly. There is an assumption today that anything anyone says is colored by his or her political view. As soon as someone has a scent of that person's politics, a reality distortion field goes into effect. I went in search of finding a moral solution, for a common ground of our humanity. I am a proudly naive optimist. If we can agree on a single fundamental moral question, then we can grow that consensus and our experience to arrive at broad agreement on a number of constantly divisive issues.

The question I asked is whether it is better to kill or be killed, from strictly a moral perspective. It was, I thought, a very simple question, with an obvious moral answer. What I found instead was that conservatives have trouble hearing the question. I pulled a thread of commonality through McCarthyism, the Clinton investigations, and the anti-Dixie Chicks criticism. The same thread explained Islamic terrorism, suicide bombers, the Vietnam Conflict and explored the moral dilemma of war. As much as anything I have ever read, it explains the perpetual divisions that mark human affairs. It was a call for intellectuals to speak loudly and clearly about the issues they have taken the time to ponder, and called on citizens to sacrifice more, and respect the power of their vote for the revolutionary change that it is.

The Democrats probably liked it because it seemed to attack Republicans, and the Republicans were so enraged by certain characterizations that they missed the point to the entire essay. For those who missed the point: IT IS NOT ABOUT POLITICAL PARTIES. It is about conservative MORAL choices and liberal MORAL choices. We all make both, both political parties make both. My argument is that if we just make liberal MORAL choices, then many of the conflicts we fight will cease to be.

What I also discovered is that those who shout loudest about liberal moral relativism are already guilty of moral abandonment. The liberal morals are consistent and patient and forgiving and self-sacrificing. The conservative morals are absolute, impatient, and hateful. Complex cerebral schemes are constructed to justify a cocoon of superiority and expediency. Hate, killing, and rage all co-exist easily in a conservative morality. Morality suspended to defend morality is the devil. One cannot love with hate anymore than one can hate with love.

The political parties have aligned themselves around a chaotic mixture of greed, need, and opposing moral choices. Like two planets caught in a gravitational orbit, whenever one party changes its moral position to match the other, the other party shifts its gravitational pull to the opposite effect. This is the cause of our political distress. Our morality is out of balance. Recently President Bush called on Israel to stop attacking Palestine in retaliation of suicide bombers. It was good advice. Die First rather than Kill First. The problem is, when he was confronted with the same choice, he made the same choice Israel did, to Kill First.

We all choose to believe in God. My essay, An Interpretation of the Unknown, does not really prove that God exists, despite my best efforts. If we can make the positive choice to affirm God's existence, then we can likewise make the conscious positive choice to Die First, which is the only proper expression of morality. By agreeing on this one fundamental point, we can reconstruct our society.

The chaos of our lives can be viewed optimistically or pessimistically. The conservative view is pessimistic, the liberal view is optimistic. One is impudent, the other omnipotent. Morality is the courage and strength to do the difficult. Kill First is a fair-weather morality, based on fear, it is as relativistic as relativism can be. It fails every challenge. It serves neither God nor man. Unfortunately, it is also a strong impulse.

Chances are, you may be wondering why anyone would have the audacity to suggest a Constitutional Convention, especially in light of our current politics. Mao had his Little Red Book, Karl Mark his Communist Manifesto, Thomas Paine had Common Sense, Chernyshevsky had What is to be Done? Words can change the world. Nothing is more important than the ideas in our heads. The whole point to free speech is to speak loudly, with the hope that the best ideas will be recognized. Whatever we choose to do will be an imperfect solution, since we ourselves are imperfect, but that does not mean our lot can't be made better.

This essay is to give a reflection of the ramblings in my head. Yes, it is all psycho-babble. Whatever genius I have will be proven to be folly some day. I'm not Mao. Not only do I have self-doubts, but I can envision why

and how I should be wrong. What I suggest is only a small step. Compared to what should be known by each man, I know only a little. My philosophy is a distillation of only what I have had the opportunity to learn. What I don't know or can't imagine, I cannot accommodate. I have some keys that seem to make sense. They are morally and economically consistent. Nevertheless, the chaos of everyone's life will continue. Those with a poor or troubled spirit will always need a helping hand, and demand and consume greater attention and resources than those with a strong spirit. A Second Constitutional Convention needs to be part of our continuing evolution. America is a leader in the world, we should have the courage to take small steps. We have a global responsibility to lead wisely, and a debt to pay to the Native Americans and American slaves.

Imagine a world and a life better than the one we live in now- a world where hate and murder and killing is rare, a world where the deaf can hear mechanically, a world where the simple problems are solved, and we are free to explore our human spirit. Whatever philosophy or religion we embrace, we must embrace our imperfection with it. To think we know the truth means we have yet to begin the journey.

I am a mundane man living a mundane life. I am a church-going shopkeeper leading the exemplary life of hard-work and self-reliance. Political conservatives would describe me as the perfect American citizen. I do not believe this Panglossian interpretation of free enterprise that suggests I am virtuous. The real heroes in our society are Paul, the Bish's in their advocacy, and the good doctor who spent years in search of a cure. They sacrifice themselves to a Die First moral choice. They plant and nurture seeds, rather than demanding the fruit of the harvest. That is the heroic example of Love One Another.

A society based on morality is a challenge for all of us, and the rewards are much greater than personal wealth. By empowering the real heroes, rather than entrepreneurs, we will have more real heroes. Much of the chaos that man suffers is man-made. The chaos caused by the criminal, Mother Nature, and time will always be with us, but our strength as a community is greater than our strength as an individual. Youthful exuberance and selfishness, a form of both lazy thinking and stupidity, will always exist, because personal journeys begin anew every day in maternity wards. People like Paul will always have a job in challenging youth to think beyond themselves and adopt a Die First philosophy. It takes time to grow morally mature.

The mistakes and wise choices of the past have given us the opportunity to make a different choice, as they always do. The current domestic and international political situation requires that we do something big, and it would be best if we do it quickly. 9/11 was a challenge. My essay, Slavery to Utopia, is a challenge. Can we create a society where to Die First is always the first choice? Can we achieve an 80/20 consensus and peace between men? Can the adults of this world lead the children, or will selfish youthful exuberance and moral confusion continue to define our nation?

I am a writer. I do not write for the art of writing, but for the politics of the moment. Our American destiny has been to challenge the world as much as ourselves. The time has come to do it again.

Free Will is best expressed as a personal challenge, a willingness to choose the difficult and carry it through to the end. Parents and soldiers are everyday examples of Free Will. Free Will is choosing to Love, regardless of the cost. Free Will is the courage to make a moral decision, but which one? To Kill First or Die First?

Kill First is self-preservation and power and complacency with the status quo. It seeks to divide rather than unite. Die First is radical. It is an intellectual passion that overrules our emotional anger. It is an emotional purity that overrules our intellectual fears. The moral and political challenge I write about has Love at its center. It is a revolution against hate, against selfishness, against fear. **Can America lead the world with high moral**

**principles? Can we defeat terrorism with an example of our renewal? I believe we can. We all lead mundane lives, and this is the challenge for mundane people everywhere.**

## 12. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 5 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Friday, 07/25/03

### **The Call for a Constitutional Convention**

In our country, a clerk making change at a convenience store makes \$7.00 an hour in a high-risk situation, and a toll taker making change on a state toll road makes \$22.00 with health insurance and pension benefits. The same person making change at a cafeteria could expect yet another different wage and benefit package. We attribute this situation to the free market, but really it's about power. The unionized toll collector has power, the convenience clerk and the cafeteria workers have less power, relative to the strength of the organizations that they work for, unionized or not.

### **The Chaos of Free Enterprise**

The free enterprise system provides no logic, no justice and no control. Both the worker and the corporations are subject to the whim of a non-sensical marketplace. The stronger the corporation is, the more likely it will be targeted by the union. The "invisible" hand of free enterprise invites both the chaos and the slavery to form. It is the corporate drive for profitability that creates the original chaos, as it tries to negotiate a legal slave wage, and the nascent strength of the unions just makes the chaos worse. All men are created equal, but this system generates inequality. Mutual Responsibility does not require equal pay for equal work, but a more equitable reward for work is a side effect of such a system. A system that rewards each man equally for the same effort is morally better than one that does not.

### **The Government's Dilemma**

A starting point to making a practical change is to assess how we operate now. Our government has three primary responsibilities: To protect the nation's borders, to provide for the social welfare of the people, and to act as referee for the competition between private corporations. It is the third role of referee that consumes much of our government labor, and the attention of our free press as well.

Taxes, by definition, are against the fiduciary interest of a corporation. They want the government to provide all its services for free, regardless of the fact that corporations are a huge cost for the operation of the government. Because taxes are the focal mechanism for the government to exist, corporations (and individuals) fight any tax or expenditure, which does not effect or benefit them directly. As a result, we have a myriad of laws, tax laws, lobbying for loopholes, legal interpretations and judicial decisions. We tax and audit at the level of minutiae. For every pet project, there is a pet fee to fund it. Every fee and every fund is administered and audited at every level of government. Along with this activity there is an entire private infrastructure built around understanding, interpreting, and auditing these same laws, and a judicial branch to decide any conflicts. This is an enormous wealth of human talent, and it is all spent in a bureaucratic dead end. All this activity does nothing to further the basic spirit of man, and creates no real wealth for the nation.

Free enterprise generates a demand for professional lawyers, accountants, auditors and clerks, when we

could just as easily have more builders, doctors, counselors, teachers, engineers and scientists. Our collective diversity is our greatest strength. We waste our resources by perpetuating a system that makes numbers written on a piece of paper our primary goal. What Adam Smith described in *The Wealth of Nations* was the manufacture of products for a useful purpose. We have made the record keeping more expensive than the product it tracks, because doing so serves the narrow self-interests of the participants. As a society, we could work a four-day week, and enjoy our leisure, our family, and our personal interests more, and audit less. Instead we are increasing our workload, and both parents often work outside the home.

The free enterprise model may have fit an agrarian age, when the natural rhythm of the day was determined by the sunset and the seasons. As we have harnessed energy, and our society has grown more complex and inter-related, it has failed the basic test of being rational, much less utopian. It is generating less real wealth and destroying our families. The government's mandate is to support free enterprise, unchecked wealth and private property. It is powerless to stop the wasteful cycle.

### **Governing Choices**

When our young nation made the change from the Articles of Confederation to the central government as embodied in *The Constitution*, we made a massive and important change based on the power of the vote. That change codified the social utopian ideals of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. We need the wisdom and the courage to make another fundamental change to our public affairs. We need to change our economic model to fit the ideals of our social life. Our economic model is in conflict with our civil liberties. Free enterprise squanders our wealth, our opportunity and our freedom.

When the government tries to develop enterprise zones, redistribute wealth, formulate tax schedules, encourage consistency, promote research, provide health and retirement benefits, provide defense, fair elections, protect the environment, and arbitrate the checks and balances of commerce, crime and human frailties, it does so because there is no other power to take the responsibilities of governing. If business took on more of the burden of social needs, the government could be smaller and more effective. This system we live under creates government expansion by virtue of the failure of corporate powers to engage in a broader view, which they cannot do because it is against their self-interest.

### **The Philosophy of Mutual Responsibility**

Consider a new formula. Not socialism where the government owns the businesses, not capitalism where the businesses do whatever they can get away with, but an industrial-nationalism where both private corporations and governments are mandated to provide equally.

Core benefits are part of every workers rights, they are not negotiated, they are universal. Free speech and the freedom to worship apply equally to everyone. This system expands it to include health care and the fruit of ones labor. Private property continues, different classes of wealth continue, but free enterprise does not rule the system unchecked.

Whatever the government does for itself, the businesses must also do, and vice-versa. It is an equalization of life's basic requirements. Business competition is based on the skills and productivity of the employees, not on the ability of one group to manipulate its workers' rewards. There is no need for labor unions. Health benefits are pooled and equal between private and public corporations.

Union and government jobs often provide a “set for life” mentality that often yields high costs and low productivity. The private sector complains, but seldom offers a better alternative. It is quick to provide a select few with much, and leave the bulk of its employees far behind. Mutual Responsibility eliminates the “set for life” mentality of all three groups.

Everyone who works is vested through a profit-sharing mechanism in the success of the corporation. Likewise, when the corporation struggles, all employees struggle with it. This motivates the middle management to be effective within the corporation, and binds the laborers and managers fortunes together. When the corporation is successful, all the employees are successful with it.

A formula of Mutual Responsibility will improve the quality of life for all. Corporations need to be reformulated from enterprises for predatory profit to partners in the American experiment. There will also be less poison in our politics. The equaling of Mutual Responsibility will dilute the power of corporations and unions. Like the vote and our other freedoms, Mutual Responsibility will empower each citizen, but not one over another. Corporations are made up of citizens, and have neither a right nor a need to be treated as a separate entity. Corporations do not sit on the jury at a trial because they are not a peer of the individual. Likewise, they should not control the machinations of government, or be held in higher regard than the individual. Corporations should be subject to the same collective rights and freedoms as the individual, as well as the same limitations. **The framers of the Constitution did not envision the role corporations would come to play.**

# 13. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 6 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Monday, 08/04/03

## **The Middle Ground**

Americans, in general, undervalue the power and promise of self-government. We don't trust the government with our money, but we expect them to use it to solve all our problems. The only other group with money is corporate America, but we don't want them to control our government. The Contract for Mutual Responsibility finds a middle ground where private property continues, but the government controls the corporations in new areas. It ensures that all workers have their basic physical and spiritual needs met first in the quest for corporate profit.

Free enterprise elevates the rights of corporations over the worker, the government, and society at large. Under Mutual Responsibility, the Labor Corporation and the Industry Corporation both lose some power. The rights of the individual are elevated instead. In the same way free speech is protected, protection is also given to the fruit of one's labor. In an agrarian society this protection was not necessary, except for the slaves.

A simplified tax code with mandated profit sharing and benefits makes everyone equal. It isn't negotiated by the union or based on the generosity or profitability of the corporation. Under the current system, one company has an advantage over another because of its unionized or non-unionized work force. Under Mutual Responsibility, corporations compete as equals.

Small businesses can compete equally with large businesses because the benefits pool will cost the same, ensuring growth and innovation of new ideas and technologies. The best way to make more money will still be to start your own business. Entrepreneurial freedom is intact. When every worker has full benefits and rewarding pay, the government burden is less. Government can spend less time social engineering the failures of private enterprise.

## **Our History, Wealth and Power**

We are a great and powerful nation because our forefathers gave power to the people. We need to trust this wisdom, and empower the people yet again with a quasi-ownership mechanism in our developing industrial national society. This new formula will solve many of the problems we have been wrestling with for the last 100 years, and leave far fewer citizens behind. It doesn't make the government bigger, it's not a federal program. The entrepreneurs will still have the opportunity to earn more, the American spirit will be preserved, but we will go forward as one nation united in wealth and strength, not divided by opportunity and power. This formula changes the rules for all of us, but it does not expect more from any of us. It is self-interest, channeled better. It checks the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots, and it will re-establish the disappearing middle-class.

Corporate America, which can be better described as the top 5%-10% of Americans, would give up a lot. But they would get a lot in return. Wealth accumulation, by definition, is only half of the priority, it is also playing and winning. That still goes on, the rewards are just less hyper-inflated, and the gains are more secure, since a downturn in the market does not wash out fortunes overnight. Also, it makes the society they live in more secure. There is less crime, less blight, less poverty.

## Recent Political Events

Close elections seem to reveal a nation split. It is not a split, but rather a sense that both parties are failing to address what is wrong. The choice is between two equally bad corporations. The message to be read is that we need a new formula, not a third party. People are unhappy. There are power concentrations, political partisanship, and money flowing everywhere. Each side blames the other for everything that is wrong, but as power and positions have flip-flopped, only the workers effort has been consistent. Recessions and deficits and corporate downsizing were followed by taxes, surpluses and hyper-growth. Neither extreme lasted, neither extreme seemed right, and the cycle is returning again.

Proposition 2 1/2, the last attempt at a formula-driven solution, has created its own set of problems. Towns now look to state and federal solutions for local problems. It was too narrowly defined, and treated only a symptom, not the cause.

Our leaders are failing, and the people's interest on the pocketbook issues perpetuates the problem. The paradigm of the marketplace is now used to explain away all injustices. Individuals seek to be as greedy as the examples set by the corporations. If we do not hang together, we will hang ourselves separately. Our social utopian community will be lost due to our own blindness.

Rather than campaign finance reform, which simply shifts how corporate and labor money flows into campaigns, we shift the flow of political power and money to the workers. Private property continues, and the government has the benefit of having public goals privatized in the new responsibilities of the corporations. This is a partnering of public and private powers, which by weakening each strengthens both. The result is a society that meets its philosophical goals by creating a new social framework.

## The Invisible Hand of Free Enterprise

Cash and interest payments controls free enterprise. Free Enterprise is a misnomer, it is actually a system of rigorous controls to divert property and create wealth for the slave-masters. The entire system revolves around interest payments, and the profits and wealth that can be derived from them. Loans and investments have no limit on the amount of interest obligation that can be returned.

All of America is attached to this interest profit system, and because we are all free to participate in it, it is regarded as free. In reality, it enslaves all of us to a system that creates a fictitious wealth. When the stock market crashes, or a stock or corporation loses its value, a lifetime of earnings and work can vanish in an instant. Our wealth was never real, it is based on made up figures written on a piece of paper. It is interest that is being hoarded and driving our price values, but it is not real wealth, either physically, intellectually or spiritually. Even without the criminal activities of the gatekeepers at Wall Street, interest creates a system that is immoral and anti-utopian. Only the Muslims can imagine a world without interest.

Without the attraction of different interest rates, every transaction under free enterprise changes. Adam Smith recognized private wealth as a tool for building a better society, but it was based on the citizen being productive. Interest is an insidious form of taxation. A tax is a levy on a transaction, interest is a mechanism for draining the capital from one person to another. Venture capital and the stock market, the primary engines of the modern corporate infrastructure, all rely on interest payments as stock returns as the liberating force to generate personal wealth.

Investors seek the greatest return, and the money constantly flows from one entity to another in hopes of maximizing the return. The abundance of products in the marketplace is credited to free enterprise, when just the

opposite is true. Only those products that give a great return are funded. We now create new medicines to make money, not to cure illness. We should be giving credit to the inventor scientist, not to a system that restricts opportunity. After thousands of years, the best medicine is now that which promises the greatest return. **Interest is a leech on free enterprise, and is how everyone is robbed of the fruits of their labor.**

# 14. DRINK A TOAST TO ABORTION

Friday, 08/08/03

Journey Well, my unnamed friend. May the speed at which you enter the unknown bring you comfort and peace. Regrettably, you have missed one of life's surest experiences, a chance to visit the battlefield of ideas. The living you left behind will wage moral arguments of political duplicity, with one side convinced of their sureness, and the other convinced of their unsureness. I sit uneasy with both, which is the price of being an idealist.

Let me tell you what you missed, and of how love and hate commingle in an incestuous relationship. You have been defeated by both. Those who love you hate your mother, and those who love her have abandoned you.

What can you teach us, what do you know? Your silence I find so deafening. Let me tell you my best guess. There are some who see nudity as pornography. Where one sees beauty, the other sees lust. There are some who see sexuality as beastly. Where one sees expression, the other sees obscenity. There are some who see compassion as indifference. Where one sees suffering, the others sees disregard.

Here on this battlefield there are only two choices. To be free, or to not be free, and both seek to be the one by denying the other. You impose yourself. You are a third party in a battle between two. No matter who wins, you lose, because the victor does not tolerate dissent.

There was a time when I could not drink to you. This was a time long ago, when we were both of the unborn. Let me tell you about what you did not get to learn.

Back then, a group of people took it upon themselves to design what frailties you were not allowed to have. They meant well of course, concerned as they were for the example that was set for their young, and perhaps as well for the spirit and the soul of fallen. So much pain can flow from the neck of a bottle. Unfortunately, the human spirit cannot be taught a mistake until it experiences it firsthand. Prohibition became the law of the land, and people drank all the more. The makers of the law became angry that no one complied, and the more people drank, the angrier they became. The people who drank, became trickier and trickier, and angrier and angrier in return. Before long, everyone was really angry, and the lesson for the children was something quite other than what had been intended. They were being taught about moral certainty. A lot of killing always takes place with the expression of moral certainty.

Moral certainty, on the battlefield of ideas, is the notion that whatever I believe is right, and therefore I have the power (and the right and the duty) to stop you from whatever it is that I think you are doing wrong. Both sides were convinced of their moral certainty, and battled ferociously until finally the people who "did not have a dog in the fight" said, "Enough!" Not having a dog in the fight means that you could see both sides of the problem. Some nudity is pornography, but not all. A taboo is not a moral certainty, and different peoples have different social customs. Finally, everyone was able to have a drink and not cower in fear. The killing stopped.

You have left a situation where religions and continents and nations are now locked in epic battles regarding what are equally trivial issues. All of the players in conflict are convinced of their moral certainty, while the idealists sit watching sadly from the sidelines. What binds these forces of moral certainty together and against each other is the concept of being a moral warrior. For some it is being a Christian warrior, for the others it is a Muslim warrior, both share the same elements of hate. No Drinking Allowed. No Listening to Music. Whatever is decided, it is morally correct.

This certainty expresses itself as the right to control others, but not in the way that a parent lovingly controls a child, but rather in the way a mob abuses its victim. I describe this to friends as a kill-first conservative morality. Like the difference between nudity and pornography, it is a fine line. The kill-first morality may care about an important issue, but it strikes a person down. The die-first morality likewise cares about the same issue, but it seeks to lift the person up. Unfortunately, like most affairs of men, the issue is just slightly more complicated.

Both the kill-first moralist and the die-first moralist are the same person. They both believe they occupy the center on the battlefield of ideas, but there are actually two battlefields, not just the one. One battlefield is personal, the other battlefield is public. This is where the incestuous relationship between Love and Hate occurs. Conflicts are always between the two kill-first moralist positions from their respective fields of battle. In your case, your mother was a private kill-first moralist on the personal battlefield, and the people who tried to stop her were kill-first moralists on the public battlefield. Your mother did not care about you, and those trying to save you did not care about her. The same controlling moral certainty, different interpretations, aimed at each other, from a different battlefield perspective.

The private die-first moralist mother would not abort you, and the public die-first moralist would not attempt to control your mother. You will only find kill-first moralists on these battlefields. We all enter onto this battlefield. It is only by doing battle that we can learn what is so precious to defend. Only in battle can we learn to drop our armaments of moral certainty and open our hearts to our unending moral tragedy. The die-first moralists will defend against the public mob, and do their best to lift up those kill-first moralists from the error in their ways, but not every battle will be won.

I am not a big drinker, but there was a time when I did so regularly. Someone fought a battle for me, so I would have the opportunity to make my own mistakes. I will do the same for you.

You have left behind a world of partisan anger, and of rising moral certainty, both nationally and internationally. The kill first morality took you, and if it didn't take you it would have taken your mother. The sad reality is it could have taken you in a thousand different ways; this method was just the most poignant. The ironic thing is that the children are always the victims of kill-first moral certainty.

Journey Well my unnamed friend, I will toast your silent courage. Some would call me a bleeding heart liberal. I proudly stand accused.

# 15. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 7 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Thursday, 08/14/03

## **The Goals of Mutual Responsibility**

Mutual Responsibility has simple utopian goals: food and health, education and worship, for everyone. Despite a long history of disagreement on how to achieve success, most people would recognize these four personal goals as primary to a better society: To be healthy, educated, productively employed, and upstanding. An economic system that prioritizes these qualities is well within America's grasp.

We are only half-wise. By agreeing to be a nation equal under the right of law, rather than subjects to a king who would hoard wealth, our forefathers created an opportunity. Throwing off the yoke of the King in 1776 required not just a systemic change, but also a radical reinterpretation of each man's place in society. The challenge of today is more difficult. The rules of the society we now live under are of our own making, there is no scapegoat but ourselves. The free enterprise model causes our political friction, not implicitly by the personal intentions of those who hold power or wealth, or of those who want the power and wealth for themselves. Our democracy needs to solve this conflict, or our crumbling remains will serve only as an example. As we have learned from others, so will others learn from us if we fail.

Armed again with courage to change our world, our economic utopian goals can be accomplished with five simple Constitutional changes. By using the best gift of democracy, our power to vote, we can remake ourselves peacefully.

Thomas Paine introduced Common Sense with these words:

*Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.*

We have lived by these words once, we need to live by them again. We have created a society of great wealth, but of little hope; a system of laws, but of little justice; we have advanced knowledge, but have sacrificed wisdom. We can end our slavery. Utopia awaits:

## **The Contract For Mutual Responsibility**

### **1. A Zero Interest Rate**

In an agrarian age, a farmer would keep a ledger of his goods. If a neighbor needed his eggs, he would record the transfer. At some later date, the neighbor might bring a cord of wood in payment, which would also be recorded. The state of the marketplace was no different than today; you always owned someone something and someone always owed you something. This was the situation whether you were the farm-owner or the farm hand.

Interest is an imposition on the natural flow of trade. Cash flow has now become more important than the manufacturing. One cannot stand still, or slowly invest the time to hatch an idea or grow a crop. Interest creates an artificial urgency to the flow of commerce. It raises the price of goods artificially. To cover the cost of interest, one must raise his prices. This explains why prices have risen consistently over the years, despite changes in tax law and interest rates.

The issue regarding interest is very old. Muhammad taught that interest was immoral. In the modern society, where keeping track of wealth and transfers is much easier, the moral issue is still the same, but most people are completely unaware of this idea. Paying and collecting interest seems to be a natural element of free enterprise. No one questions it.

### **The Last Sermon of Prophet Muhammad**

*O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. God has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. God has judged that there shall be no interest and that all the interest due to Abbas ibn 'Abd'al Muttalib (Prophet's uncle) shall henceforth be waived...*

The American dream to own property is based on the interest payment of the mortgage. We borrow to attend college, buy a car, and a great many activities. Most home mortgages carry an interest cost that is two or three times the cost of the property. Lately we have seen college students accumulate debt on credit cards, and payment via credit card is now the norm at supermarkets. Even if the user pays off his credit card monthly, the establishment is still paying an interest charge of approximately 2% to 4% for the transaction, which when converted to an annual rate is the astoundingly high annual rate of 24% to 48%. If the cardholder gets behind, he can also pay interest rates as high as 24%. In total, the credit card companies can routinely collect an annual interest fee of almost 72% on transactions for use of their cash. A return like this is onerous on the people that labor to produce the actual goods and services that the nation consumes.

More shocking is that the stock market follows an even more extreme interest reward system. The banks and credit card companies are funded with investor's cash, and the onerous charges they collect are then passed through to investors. Lucky investors can then realize profits well above and beyond 100%, still without performing any actual labor or service. And venture capitalists, who provided the seed money initially to get the corporation off the ground before it became publicly traded, can realize gains in the 1000% range and above. Everyone is free to participate in this system, including the corporations themselves, so we call it free enterprise. The stock market of course has winners and losers. Some corporations are now profitable because of the stocks they own in other corporations, instead of for the products they actually manufacture. What we really have is mechanism of slavery that we are all subject to. The fruit of ones labor is their capital, be they an individual or a business, and it is constantly being siphoned off to others by the mechanism of interest and dividends.

Interest is a privately owned tax mechanism, much more outrageous than the colonial tax on tea. It taxes all the transactions that take place in society, and provides no one with refuge. The wealthy are forced to store money in the stock market to protect it from losing value from the constant pressure of rising prices. Of course, this

doesn't always work because sometimes the whole market drops, so even playing within the system is a futile exercise. Separate from the immorality of it, interest enslaves us all, corporations and individuals alike, to a foolish and false mechanism of wealth.

From this perspective, it is easy to see how so many economic theories and tax programs often go wrong. The constant adjusting of tax rates and interest rates is actually causing the cycles in the economy that the government hopes to control. In this area the ideas of Adam Smith may be correct, but we have not practiced them. If we left the market alone, it may in fact take care of itself. During agrarian times the biggest market force was the amount of sunlight and rainfall. As we have attempted to control the market, usually for reasons of avarice, we have made our plight worse.

Today the biggest market force is venture funding. Venture capitalists constantly fund ventures and then cut the funding off. Their decision is based on their comfort level and the success of the entrepreneur in meeting deadlines, market conditions and other more attractive opportunities. Venture capital is often credited with funding the new products that get to the marketplace, but just as often they stop the development of such products too. New businesses and technologies are started and abandoned based on a frenzy of greed that interest creates, rather than the slow path to success that the entrepreneur needs to develop his invention. Interest is the trigger for the boom and bust cycle of our economy and personal wealth. No one escapes it. Bankers, insurance companies, pension plans, manufacturers and individuals are all caught in a destructive cycle of interest lust.

Interest also creates a huge false economy. A tremendous amount of activity is spent administering the interest mechanism, not just in its application, but also to take advantage of different rates or "opportunities" in the marketplace. The farmer's hen laid just one egg, all the bookkeeping in the world will not alter that basic fact. Bookkeeping, auditing, transferring accounts, buyouts and all the modern world services that have to do with interest do not create any real wealth. If the farmer and the hen are both healthy, there is no reason to transfer their capital from one person to another. Interest puts everyone's economic life under a constant state of attack, to stand still is to fall behind. Food, clothing and shelter, our most basic of needs, are compromised by a system that transfers wealth into a fictitious system of efficiency. It serves neither the wealthy nor the poor.

## **2. Fixed Market Pricing**

Once the hen has laid an egg, who determines the price? Since the farmer knows the cost of running his farm, it is only logical that he should fix the price for his eggs. Because he has competition with other farmers, he cannot set any price he wants, but he can set the price for his own eggs, at whatever profit level he needs. A consumer should then be able to buy this farmer's eggs at the same price wherever those eggs are sold in the local community. This is a difficult burden for the farmer. Some of the resellers may be difficult to work with, want more attention, pay slow or buy less than other resellers. This is a natural fact of business life. The farmer will need to adjust his pricing accordingly, or refuse to sell to those resellers he does not want to do business with. It is important for him to charge the same price or forgo the profit entirely. Whatever he decides, that pricing pressure will be reflected in his competition with other manufacturers, who also sell to the same groups of resellers. The profit margins the reseller's use is thus set by the farmer. If he sets it too low, the reseller won't carry his goods; too high, and the consumer won't buy his goods. This ensures pricing competition in the marketplace, but it is behind the scenes, at the manufacturer level.

Why is this important? It is important because resellers currently compete unequally, and the consumer who shops for the lowest price rewards the worst behavior.

Under the current system, for a reseller to sell the same item for less than another reseller, he must do one of

two things: reduce the product cost or reduce his overhead. With a fixed retail price for the same good, the resellers will also need to have a fixed wholesale price too so they can compete equally. In general, this is already the case, but some larger buyers are able to negotiate better terms for themselves. So while a reseller can sometimes buy better under the current system, it is more likely that he will attempt to lower his overhead. Interest, of course, is also driving his need to cut costs, not the profitability of the eggs. Since the assets of the building, land, and displays are pretty much fixed, the only variables left in managing the company are the labor costs and the business expenses. He can either cut advertising or squeeze his employees. Since reducing advertising will probably reduce sales, he really has no choice but to squeeze his employees, either with smaller wages, less benefits or increased workloads. Or, if he is big enough, he can petition the government for special accommodations. We are all familiar with the tax loopholes and favoritism that marks our current system.

Fixed Market Pricing does not result in higher prices for the consumer. For the manufacturer to sell to the reseller for less he too would have to go through the same machinations of either squeezing advertising or squeezing his employees. Fair Market Pricing protects both the manufacturer and the reseller from a destructive pricing competition, and protects both of their employee groups from getting squeezed just to benefit the other. The consumer is better protected too. The price he pays is not subject to vagaries and as an employee he is not pressured to work without reward to satiate the interest mechanism.

The lack of price competition between retailers for the same product also has no ill effect. A business is not successful because of the profit margin on any one product or sale, but based on the critical mass of the sales volume. Without enough sales volume, a business cannot be profitable, regardless of any specific profit margin. With fair-trade priced products, the playing field is leveled between small and large businesses. Both the economy and the consumer win, as well as the employees of the businesses. Consumers are driven to shop for the best product and the best service, rather than price. The small business now can compete equally with the big business, and the consumer can choose accordingly. Monopolies are still equally problematical and must be avoided, and the web merchant has no price advantage over the brick-and mortar store.

For the consumer, different brands of eggs will be different prices, but the same egg will be the same price at different stores. This system treats the manufacturer, the retailer, the employee and the customer most fairly, while retaining free market competition between manufacturers. Free enterprise is the ability of individuals to participate and enter the marketplace. Entrepreneurs can still enter the marketplace and not be disadvantaged by their company size or amount of capital.

There is a cultural assumption that is rampant in our culture that lower prices are better. Underlying this is a belief that profit is unjust and predatory. While that may be true of monopolies, it is not true for most businesses. Everyone is paid from the profits a business generates. Profits are the moral fruits of ones labor. That is why interest is immoral. It takes the profit without doing any of the actual work. A Fixed Market Price mechanism is a logical extension of this philosophy, since by protecting profit it protects the fruit of ones labor. Banks and other financial institutions will need to change their business model. Instead of free checking which is paid by interest paying customers, everyone will have to pay for the services they receive. This is much more logical too. If you buy an egg then you should pay for the egg. The special arrangements for getting things free, or discounted, is a mirror of the immoral interest mechanism. It all comes at someone else's expense. Discounting promotes slavery, it devalues our morality and cheapens our relationships with each other. It also feeds the division between the business owner and the employees. Where the owner sees a competitive pricing threat, the employee sees unfair treatment. A Fixed Market Price is best for both the employers and the employees.

### 3. National Sales Tax

Citizens in a free country have two simple responsibilities: To Vote and to Pay Taxes. Beyond that, there is not much they are required to do. In our country, that would seem to be a gargantuan request. Very few people vote who are eligible, despite the sacrifices made on their behalf by previous generations. And taxes? Well, you know. Is there anything that is talked about more, complained about, adjusted, promoted, or frightening than taxes? One would believe that taxes have some sort of magic power. Sometimes I think taxes must be a fire-breathing dragon, blocking out the sun, and spewing a hot breath of fire on the poor innocent townspeople below. And our Congress, it is full of wise wizards of black arts, who argue amongst themselves as to whether they should stab the dragon in its belly, or try to put a harness on it, and put the children of the village on its back, and ride it to some enchanted village on the other side of the mountain. Whatever idea should come into your head, whatever image you see for the future, it will only be accomplished by doing battle with this dragon of death and magic. Hmm. Maybe the dragon is neither scary nor magical. Maybe it is just a way to get things done, like a bucket to carry the water from the river. You need the water, and you need to carry it. We can do it the easy way, or we can do it the hard way.

There was a time, when our nation was young, when courageous men risked their property, their lives, and their families, for an idea. They were simple men who lived simple lives. They worked hard, they lived a hard life. They rode horses and read by candlelight. They did not always agree.

People have never changed throughout history. We are all born stupid. Some people get wiser as they grow older, some people grow otherwise. We still make great sacrifices for an idea, but somewhere along the line we lost sight of what was the original idea. When the dust had settled from the War of Independence, we set about the business of forming a system of government. We started the document with three simple words: We the People. The magical dragon is not our foe, he is our guide. It is the expression of our collective spirit. If the dragon is wild and unwieldy and angry and destructive, then that is what our collective spirit has become. We the People have lost our way, and nothing reveals that more than our tax code. We all make mistakes, and our founding fathers made one too. Actually, I should rephrase, they did the best they could under the circumstances. They took a system of monarchy, and gave rights to the common man. For them, that was the paramount problem. We are now well into this experiment, and our rights are reasonably well secured. For us, the paramount problem is our economic model. We live in a new industrial world. The growth of the industrial world created immediate social conflicts. The Communist Manifesto was written in 1848, when America still had slaves. We are infants in what will be the history of industrial society.

The founding fathers gave us a social utopian beginning, and it has been adjusted only slightly over the years. The economic model it was paired with, free enterprise, was recognized as problematical even then, because it elevated greed to a virtue. The system of checks and balances had been intended to keep the greed in check. Instead, we now have a system that is driven by the greed. It was a very delicate balance that they aimed for, because it was not greed to want to keep the fruit of ones labor. A system that allows a man to work hard, and to do the work of his choosing, is a free system. It intended to free him economically, in the same way the Bill of Rights freed him individually. Industrialism and the rise of corporations tipped the balance.

There is nothing in the current system to counterbalance corporate strength. We now have a system of greed that no one can control. The interest mechanism is driving the corporations as much as the corporations drive the tax laws. And of course, all of the employees, in all of the corporations, are getting squeezed as well, as do the stockholders of the corporations. Interest and corporate power has distorted our economic system. The system itself drives the perpetual need for greed. The simple spirit of egalitarianism, which was contained in the words We The People, has been lost.

Throughout history, taxes have always been a hot button issue. Lady Godiva rode naked to protest taxes. We dumped tea into the harbor to protest the King's new tax. The King's tax was to pay for the colonies defense. We were unreasonable to think we should not have to pay for our own benefits. Greed is not just a modern phenomenon. The American complaint then, and the American belief now, is still the same: No Taxation Without Representation. That argument was somewhat disingenuous then, and it is equally disingenuous now. People simply prefer to get things for free, especially if they think the other guy has more money than they do. The people wanted to be free of the King, and taxes were a convenient rallying point. So now we have a system of representation, and people still claim to only want to pay a tax that benefits them directly. More often, they want to charge those directly who created the cost. It is really a system of commonwealth managed by a system of common stupidity. It is the same disingenuous claim, but on a smaller scale. At its heart is the problem that concerned Thomas Paine the most, the elevation of greed to a virtue.

The result of this odd combination of idealism and pettiness is the tax dragon. Do we ride him or do we kill him? Will he help us or will he kill us? The answer is he can do both, like most affairs of men, there is no perfect system. Our current system is pretty bad however. The biggest problem with it is that there is no room for courageous thinking, since everyone's interests is now narrowly defined. Somebody wants funds or somebody wants a break or somebody sees a problem, and the solution is always the same: adjust the tax code, make an exception, charge a fee, tax that activity or not. If it is not specifically budgeted and paid for it cannot be accomplished. The system of checks and balances does not set priorities and work through a list needs, everything is a trade off. That in and of itself is not such a bad thing, the problem comes in the way it is done. Because of the idea of No Taxation Without Representation, we have a dragon of confusion. We tax, we fee, we audit, we change, we update and we do it over and over again. Is the government a bureaucratic nightmare? Absolutely. What we need is Taxation Without Any Specific Representation. The representatives' job is only to spend the money wisely, and to determine the three tax rates that everyone pays equally. The first of which is a National sales tax.

The National sales tax does not apply to man's basic needs: food, shelter and clothing. It probably should not apply to transportation either, since that really is an essential component of our humanity in the modern world. People have to travel to work, they have to buy a car and gasoline to get there, and so they should not be taxed just for traveling. Likewise, the cost of transporting a product is in its cost, so it does not need to be taxed on its way either. Also, there would not be a meals tax for prepared food. People have to travel and they have to eat. The sales tax does not apply to things that are resold, the same as the current system, as that would artificially inflate wholesaler to distributor prices and the same product would be taxed twice. Only the end-user pays tax. Somebody who is poor and living on the edge pays no tax, since food, clothing, shelter and transportation are all exempt. The more non-essential products you buy, the more tax you will pay. This allows people flexibility in their economic circumstances. When times are tight, they can tighten their belt more easily, they don't have to petition the government for tax relief, they can just spend less. The people who are wealthy and buy more pay more, but they get all the same exemptions as the poor people. The main elements of their lifestyle, where they live, what they eat, how they dress are all untouched, including their travel and hotel rooms. Building materials are taxed, however. So if you build a new home, you pay a sales tax, but there is no capital gains tax if you sell a property.

By eliminating the income tax, for both individuals and corporations, and the myriad of tax incentives, fees, offsets and rebates, it drastically simplifies the function of government and makes peoples lives easier and simpler. The annual crunch of tax day is eliminated. The artificial strategizing and buying to avoid taxes is eliminated. All the estate planning that goes on is eliminated. When you die, the family keeps the money. When the heirs buy something with it, the government collects its tax then. Money sits idle in the bank. It draws no interest, it

generates no income. People are free to do with it what they will. A national sales tax eliminates mountains and mountains of paperwork, frustration, corporate lobbying, artificial incentives and confusion.

Corporations and citizens are treated as financial equals. Rules, laws and regulations continue to exist, and breaking them will have consequences, but fees are no longer a revenue stream. If cars or trucks need to be inspected annually, then a system of inspection can be set up, but there would be no fee to cover the system of inspecting. Inspections can be based on age or mileage of the car, rather than the artificial trigger of annually. The ability to levy individual fees and taxes creates an incentive for lawmakers to add more fees and taxes. As we now know, there is no end in sight to this bad habit of funding pet projects and special favors. Lawmakers need to redevelop the habits of the original founders, to think broadly and with a degree of egalitarianism. Without the ability to micromanage the economy, and with the elimination of income tax and fees, lobbying will reflect serious social problems rather than corporate favoritism. Lawmakers will be free to serve the broader needs of the people rather than narrow selfish interests.

Since revenue is collected constantly from the natural flow of the economy, the only auditing required is of merchants that are collecting and paying sales tax. Tax loopholes, tax shelters and all related accounting schemes are rendered moot. There is nothing to hide. Even conventional criminal activity is less damaging, since they will be paying taxes on the things they buy.

By following the trail of manufactured goods from the manufacturer to the end-user most abuses can be caught quickly and easily. Laws will no longer act as a shield of confusion that block average people from the same privileges others receive. Government regulations will continue, but without fees attached. If something needs to be done that is in our collective interest, then the government will foot the bill from the general treasury. No longer will we use a fee paid by an industry to regulate and inspect the industry. It is a conflict of interest for the government to collect payments from the person it is regulating and unfair.

The people have two responsibilities, to vote and pay taxes. With a National Sales Tax, understanding the tax laws will be as easy as voting. Corporations and citizens we have equal rights.

#### **4. Universal Health Insurance and Social Security Insurance**

Despite the best attempts to treat everyone as equal, the fact remains that people are different. Our physical make-up is different, our interests, our abilities, and our dreams are all different. We need a system that respects our both commonalities and our differences. One commonality is death, and his best friend time. We are all going to age, we are all going to get sick. The differences between us are only when, why and how. There is no if. Everyone needs healthcare, and everyone needs the same healthcare.

In the same way we have created a tax dragon of micro-mismanagement, we have done the same with healthcare. There are as many health plans as there are taxes and fees. You really cannot blame this problem on the government, this is the inevitable result of the idea that greed is good. Everyone is constantly seeking a less expensive plan. The healthy do not want to pay for the sick and the sick want help from the healthy. We need a system that is based on our ancient sense of community. If you are sick, you go to the medicine man, and he tries to cure you. We have healthcare capacity in our society, but it is guarded by a maze of confusion. It serves neither the patients nor the providers. We all have the same body parts, the healthcare system should treat the people attached to those body parts equally.

None of us really knows what healthcare we will need. Needing care is winning the lottery of chaos. It is not something anyone wants to collect on. The question is how to pay for it. The solution is to simplify the transaction and to share the burden. That is the whole idea behind insurance is it not? While we have no income tax, there will be a payment based on income for health insurance. It is a fixed percentage of income. The more you

make, the more you pay. There is no upper limit, there is no minimum payment. If you don't work, you are still covered. Whenever you get a paycheck, that percentage is deducted. It is fixed the same for everyone, just like the sales tax.

When you retire, or stop working, your health care is provided by those who are still working. But when you retire, you still need money to live. Social Security currently helps people with that problem. Social Security continues, but the pay out is based on what you paid in. If you lived poorly all your life, Social Security will help keep you in the style you are accustomed to. If you lived well, then it will pay you well. Social Security is also paid as a fixed percentage of income. With interest and dividend payments eliminated in society, it is the only place that exists where you can grow an income without actually working. This provides a counter-balance to the desire to get free healthcare by hiding income. If you hide your income from a cash business, you are also robbing your future. And of course, you are still paying sales tax on everything you purchase, so there is little incentive to cheat except to get free health care.

These only two income based taxes, one for Health Insurance and another for Social Security, at a fixed rate for everyone, will eliminate all the draconian machinations of the IRS. We have a system where we are all slaves to numbers written on a piece of paper. We create artificial rules, artificial laws, and artificial penalties to serve an artificial system. And we do this to ourselves! This system will free the individual to attend to his own interests, and his own dreams, at the time of his own choosing. Many people fear to change jobs or attempt new endeavors because of the cost of health insurance. This frees our collective spirit from this burden. We no longer have to look to our employer for a solution to our healthcare or our pension, and it frees the employer from competing over items he cannot control. He no longer needs to squeeze the worker's benefits, since he is no longer responsible for them. Whenever, wherever, we earn money, it will be enough to cover the cost of our healthcare and our retirement. The individual is empowered, the employer is released. We all are better off with universal benefits.

## **5. Corporate Income Balancing**

As discussed, the interest mechanism promotes slavery by transferring wealth from one party to another based on the transactions that take place. The person who does the work is robbed by the person who does none. We are all both the robber and the slave, since we all benefit and pay into this mechanism.

Wealth in a corporation tends to flow up and out. It flows up to the officers, CEO's, etc, and then it flows out to the shareholders. Employees get their share based on the market forces within the corporation. Some companies pay better than others, and have better benefits, pension and insurance plans. Every company is unique, industries are different, and the leaders themselves also cause cycles based on their interests and attention to the details of managing the enterprise. People tend to think of corporations as a thing, as opposed to a group of people making decisions the best way they can.

Corporations, like the people at large, are under enormous stress to keep up with the interest cycle. It only takes three bad decisions to put a company out of business. Our history is littered with companies whose success suddenly vanished. Small companies and big companies are all subject to the same problems. Timing, product, skills and opportunity all play a critical role. We have even seen the same problem occur in government. If one makes too many bad decisions in a row, or if a couple of unintended consequences occur, bankruptcy is always the result.

It used to be that we put debtors in prison. That practice was abandoned when it was finally realized that imprisoning the poor would cost more than the crime of which they stood accused. Since the government did not

want to assume the debt of punishing, it was decided instead that being poor and owing money was not a crime. This is an interesting paradox, because what it really says is that if you take money from someone it is a crime (stealing), but if they lend it to you and do not pay them back it is not a crime (bankruptcy). Ironically, there is a movement underway to make bankruptcy a crime again. The biggest victims of bankruptcies are the credit card companies, who of course are driving forces behind the slavery that interest causes, and the cause of the bankruptcies.

Along with a skyrocketing number of bankruptcies, we have seen the rise of two-income families, and yearly health costs increases. Despite the micro-mismanagement attempts in the tax rates and interest rates, we have seen wild fluctuations in the stock market and the federal deficit. The issues of this election are the same as the last, which are the same as the one before. We have been arguing about the economy and corporations and health care and social security for a very very long time. The American Revolution did not change the structure of the economy. Beyond seizing the King's property, and declaring the right to private property (which had already existed if the King liked you), we have followed the same basic economic model that the King used. Simplifying the tax structure makes our lives easier. We don't have to be bothered with the incessant need to fill out forms or decipher arcane language. It relieves us of the burden of artificial priorities. It makes our duty to pay taxes clean, quick and understandable. Nevertheless, it does not really change anything fundamentally. Three flat taxes is a better tax system than what we copied from the King. People do not like being pecked to death by a duck. It will solve that problem, but not the bigger challenge.

The bigger challenge has always been the difference between the wealthy and the poor. Wealth, of course, with all its glitter and gold, has always stood in stark contrast to the poor. Many people believe that wealth is a crime. Of course, like our attitude regarding the King's taxes, it is always the other guy's wealth that is the problem, not mine. We all believe that we came into our own wealth justly, whereas the other person came into his wealth unjustly. Or conversely, he is poor because it is his own damn fault. If he did what I did, he could be rich too. The mechanism of interest and the rise of corporations have changed all that. People are wealthy on paper much more than they are in reality. And by the same token, we are poorer on paper than we are in reality. The stock market has turned us all into slaves, whipped incessantly by rising prices and interest payments. Overnight we can become rich or poor and back again. The corporations (the people that run them) are as much a victim of this system as are other people. The attack on the World Trade Center could not possibly change our economy, because we no longer control it ourselves anymore. Our thinking that this system works is what controls us. It is the perfect Orwellian circle.

In the time before corporations and mechanization, there were always the rich and the poor. Distinctions in wealth are common. The bigger questions are why, with all the machines and technology and industrialization working hard, does the gap between the richest and poorest remain? And, how is it possible to make or lose a fortune overnight? Separate from market forces, money represents labor. Twelve eggs cost a dollar. Everybody does different work and the value of their work may be different, but a fortune represents thousands and thousands of hours of labor as much as the goods that the labor produced. Making a fortune overnight or losing a fortune overnight means you either robbed or squandered thousands of hours of labor or the goods they produced. But that does not make sense either, because an hour worked is an hour worked. An egg is an egg. It is real. What we are doing is assigning more value to the accounting than we are to the actual process.

For a pharmaceutical company to make money, it needs to manufacture a drug and sell it. It will only be successful if it can attract venture funding, go public, sell stock and sell the drug. This is considered to be the best of all possible systems. But what about the patient? Was it not the purpose of the medicine to help someone or was it always just to make money? It is at this point that greed gets elevated to a virtue. The founders expecta-

tion was that because a man wants money, he will bring to the market the goods that the market needs, and in the most efficient manner. So the entrepreneur will get his rewards and the patient the medicine they need. But what goes on now is actually very different. In the same way we have mismanaged tax collecting, competition, health care and social security, we have also mismanaged our labor.

It is possible to make or lose a fortune overnight because the value of the labor flows up and out of the corporation, where it can pool and artificially inflate in the stock market. This accounting method puts the human capital outside of the corporation. Had that value stayed in the corporation, the fortune that the labor created would also stay within the corporation, at its real value, and never be at risk. Rising prices and interest forces everyone to seek protection by using the same stock market and interest mechanisms to their own advantage, but there is a better way.

Corporate Income Balancing can have the same effect as the stock market for providing venture capital to seed and sustain corporate ventures. In a world without interest payments, time becomes an asset. Under the current system, when cash flow is critical, time is a liability. Interest payments can put a project underwater if it is late starting. The participants, the employees, have no flexibility in helping the enterprise directly because they have to meet the demands of their own life and interest payments. Despite doing the actual work, employees have less control over their own situation than the stockholders do. They are slaves to the stockholders, not because they are less wealthy, but because there is no mechanism for them to participate within the company. They are an expense to be squeezed. The only remedy for employees is to own shares of themselves, the same as the stockholders. One does the actual work and one does not, but somehow they are equal. That is the face of modern slavery. Corporate Income Balancing takes the role of the stockholder and assigns it to the employees.

In a world where taxes are related primarily to non-essential spending, and the interest rate is zero, anyone can contribute to a venture with their time. That was the situation in 1776. Time is money. Time is the investment that a business needs more than anything else. The current system pays the employees less so it can reward the stockholders for their "time". This is because interest forces time to be more valuable than it really is. When people are getting annual returns of 72% to 1000%, time is very valuable indeed! With zero interest, time does not increase debt automatically. This leaves everyone free to support a new venture with their own sweat equity, it can be a small business or a large one, and the effect is the same. Instead of strangers who do no work owning the company, the company is now vested with the employees. They may make less while the business grows, but as the business is successful and comes into its own, they share in its success.

Business funding is simpler. People will continue to start businesses, because it will still be the best way to earn more money. Banks will probably make most loans, and they will assume some risk, but no more than what they took when investing in the stock market.

Personal bankruptcies should cease, and saving will be common. People's wages and profit sharing will fluctuate with the demands of the business, but the masses of people who work hard will see a steady rise in the quality of life. The wealthy will see a slow drain of their income if they do not work, and salaries that have no relation to the value of the work performed will come down. Corporate Income Balancing will level out the wealth in the whole country.

Corporate Income Balancing delivers the right of private property to the workers who actually created the wealth. By working for the company, you are entitled to some of the wealth that the company creates, not just your wages, but the profits too. This turns the conventional employer-employee relationship on its head. If the employee gets squeezed at one end, he gets the profits at the other when they arrive, they do not get siphoned

out to a third party. The employer and the employee's fortunes are linked together. The virtue of greed is used to get them to work together, rather than fight because of their narrow self-interests. The wealth that would normally flow out of the corporation now stays in the corporation for the benefit of everyone there.

Since greed is natural instinct, there still needs to be a mechanism to protect the owners and the employees from each other. They do different jobs and deserve different pay. The spread however should not be open-ended, otherwise the workers will still be relegated to slave-like relationships, and the gap between the haves and the have-nots will perpetually widen. To solve that, the wages of the lowest and highest paid workers should be a factor of 12:1, and profit sharing should be equal amongst all employees. This will give the managers plenty of flexibility to manage the company. If they need to save to invest in new equipment they can. If they need to cut wages to cope with a slow or seasonal demand they can. If the owner wants a raise, everyone will get a raise along with him. Since price competition will no longer be the rule of the day, competence will be more important. Companies will get better at servicing their customers, and employees will be motivated to do the best they can. The marketplace will be more efficient and better service the consumer. Products that have a longer and more difficult development cycle will be more likely to make it to the marketplace.

Two strong forces in our current system will be rendered almost moot: Labor Unions and Corporate Lobbyists. They will both get what they always wanted, better working conditions and less taxes. We all get more efficient government and less of it. The greed of corporate officers will also be checked. All of the lobbying and mergers and manipulation of stock prices will be rendered moot. They will not be able to feather their own nest quite so easily because of the 12:1 ratio. If the ball player makes \$12 million dollars playing baseball, the kid in the stand makes \$1 million dollars selling hot dogs. This system has no effect on small businesses in the country. If someone earned \$250,000. a year, his lowest paid employee would make \$10.00 an hour.

These five changes are revolutionary, but it is a peaceful revolution. There is no redistribution of wealth that takes place. What people own today, they will own tomorrow. Stocks will be converted to cash. The banks will take a lot of deposits and make a lot of loans. They will charge for the handling of the paperwork, but not charge interest. Homeowners will own their property sooner. No one will any longer become richer or poorer overnight. Our lives will become completely different. A whole new body of laws will result, and mountains of old habits will be discarded.

A lot of people will be displaced, but by working together we will find a solution. The boom and bust cycles of the economy have proven that our nation has a huge base of activity. Everyday people eat and travel. Babies are being born and children go to school. People fall in love and get married and find a new place to live. The economy is very very strong. There is plenty of good work that needs to be done. We will adjust our thinking and our funding priorities. Accountants can teach math instead. We can have more community policing. We can train more health care providers. Pushing paper will be less of a way of life. The deficit and our taxes will have only one direction, up or down. It will be a simple adjustment to keep them in balance.

Foreign investors may pull their money out of our economy, but they may just leave it in our banks. The changes we start here may reach other shores. Perhaps we can lobby foreign countries to do the same thing. Foreign companies will need to change their way of business if they stay here. We can lead the world with a bold strike of moral courage.

Those with a lot of money may want to go out and buy things, land and property and collectibles. Let them. When they resell or develop it, it will be taxed. Working people will have a much easier time, and the wealthy can still enjoy the good life. Cash is cash. If you have a lot, you will be okay. A couple of years in, we will all

be enjoying a happier pace. It will be exciting, but it will not be easy. Some prices will skyrocket, others will plummet. We will need to resist the impulse to micro-manage it. We will all need to become more active, more involved, and more aware. Our sense of community will make an easier time of it. Money will be seen as a tool that represents a man's labor and his freedom. It will be respected for the good it can do, and greed recognized for the damage it can cause. Our accounting methods have already created a world where money means nothing, now we can use the false economy of that system to our advantage.

Since the employees, and not stockholders, are vested in the company, fees and penalties for illegal or unsafe actions will effect employees directly. This of course provides even more incentive for a cover-up of a crime, but it is equally likely to have the opposite effect too. A good paying job is now easy to find, and benefits are not tied to the company. Chances are more people will be willing to speak out about things that are done wrong to serve the profit motive. Companies will have a greater sense of community about them. People who are happier at work will be happier at home too. We will probably work less and socialize more. We can finally shed the undercurrent of anger that courses through our politics.

Two hundred and forty years ago, a group of men dared to do far more than what I propose. **All we have to do is go into a voting booth and mark a little x on the box. A small effort for a new nation.**

## 16. REVIEW - .MAC

Monday, 08/18/03

Apple has many goodies in its arsenal of great things, but one of the best has to be .Mac. A lot of people were put off by the end of iTools and the subscription fee, but .Mac quickly pays for itself in ease of use, storage and “bennies.” iTools was never anything like this. If you have a laptop, which seems to be a growing number of Mac users, it is worth its weight in gold.

I am a big fan of Safari. The tab feature and the easy bookmark control is seductive. I bookmark everything, and have created quite a few subgroups on my menu bar. I love selecting “OPEN IN TABS” and watching ten of my favorites sites open instantly. It is such a timesaver. Of course, this tab power creates a challenge. Where did I put that site that didn't fit into a category? Not everything can go into MISC. This problem was getting worse because my laptop bookmarks were different from my tower, and I would constantly be searching for X or Y in different places on the different computers. Last week I decided to try my hand at iSync. WOW! This feature alone is worth \$99.00. I don't have much of anything stored in my address book. If I had, I could be syncing my contacts and my iPod and my computers all at once. That is another project for another day. iSync was so easy to use that it is not worth describing. Trust me.

Of course, that is just one small feature of your .Mac membership. Today I got my .Mac newsletter. Today's issue comes with another free game (there have been others) and some more video training. A while back they had free training on OS X. It too was also worth its weight in gold. Despite having used OS X since 10.1.4, I picked up a few great pointers. Not just PC users are missing how good OS X works, even Mac users sometimes do too.

At home, I am the official Mac educator and troubleshooter. It is pretty much a Maytag repairman type of job. My old G4/450 tower is the family box. It has five different log-ins. The kids enjoy the free games from .mac, and when I want to use it, it's my desktop. That of course isn't a .Mac feature, but iDisk is. So even though I don't use the house machine often, I can log in and pull the files I need off my iDisk. It couldn't be any easier.

And .Mac gives you still more, like the ability to create homepages from your iPhoto library. How fast can you create a website with a bunch of photos with a coy note under each one? Pretty damn fast! I haven't used it much yet, the only thing I have up is an album of baby snapping turtles that seem to arrive annually from the pond next door to work. <http://homepage.mac.com/tshirts/PhotoAlbum3.html> But someday when I have time to fully develop my digital life-style, I will exploit this feature too. You can also password protect files in a public folder that other people can download. It is a great way to share files with colleagues, and avoids mail attachments. Remember the old BBS days? This system actually works!

With Panther, Apple is already talking about improvements to iDisk, including the ability to automatically sync and back-up your active files. The list seems to go on and on. In the past, I have been critical regarding Apple's business model of focusing on selling directly to the consumer, but this is one area where they

have hit a grand slam. It is the home run derby of technology. With the Mac world moving to laptops as the format of choice, a .Mac membership is indispensable. Steve Jobs is way out in front here. Even if you have a single stand alone machine, it is well worth the price. And you get a .mac mailing address and virus protection too.

MacMice Rating: 5 out of 5

## 17. FROM SLAVERY TO UTOPIA: PART 8 OF 8: (The Call for a Constitutional Convention)

Thursday, 08/21/03

### **Addendum - The path to peace**

There is an assumption that what makes our nation so great is the freedom of speech. There is of course a mechanical reason why this right is necessary, because you cannot make an accusation against the government without it. There is also a psychological need for people to vent their frustrations. And in the pursuit of democracy, there is the expectation that if everyone speaks their mind then a consensus will develop and a unified path will show itself. The original desire for freedom of speech, however, goes back to the Pilgrims. They wanted to express their religious view freely. That is why we have the freedom of religion and the separation of church and state. Most people assume that God exists, but even the opening words to the Declaration makes the assumption that we really do not know. There is a reference to the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God. Two distinct and separate ideas, that God is real and that maybe he is not. They sought and found a political solution with the recognition that there are and always will be two fundamentally different ideas regarding ourselves and our place in the universe.

Freedom of speech is not guaranteed so we can debate the picayune details of obscure legislation, it is for the purpose of expressing our morality. The debate over our morality is centuries old, and the different interpretations and expressions of it are the driving force of all historical events. What made the colonies unique was not the freedom of speech. To be sure, many came here with the desire to express their moral view, which was an unwelcome act in their homeland. What makes America unique is that our morality was freed and unfettered in a new world, our melting pot of social customs is nothing compared to our interpretations of the unknown and ourselves. We are a nation of extreme views, in a democratic system that prevents dominance by any one person. The best value in our freedom to speak, however, is in the freedom to listen.

By recognizing that God may or may not exist in the Declaration of Independence, the framers set an example of how we should understand ourselves and resolve our differences with each other. The competition of the marketplace was an extension of the opinion that the exchange of ideas would lead to a better understanding each other. Their plans have gone awry. The competition of the marketplace has not created a different society. Immediately after the Revolution, there were complaints about a new aristocracy forming. The egalitarian system that they sought began to crumble immediately. From a historical perspective, it is easy to see why this occurred, we did not alter the basic economic model that was handed down to us from the king. Our legislative process, and our system of taxation, were all based on old historic examples, some reaching back to the birth of democracy thousands of years ago. What really makes us unique in history is the separation of church and state.

Without an overbearing religion to tell us what is right and wrong, the people have taken it upon themselves to define their own morality. The melting pot of ideas and opportunities has provided more fodder for the moral justification of our actions. Whatever role you play in society, you have a moral interpretation that justifies every action you take. In the vacuum caused by the lack of a religious state, we

have in many cases assigned moral certainty to our economic choices. And therein lies the source of our political and economic conflicts.

I came to this vision of a new form of government by listening to the complaints of the angry. There is an abundance of rancor in our society, some about money, some about morality, and a lot of simple distrust, anger, isolation and futility. Our original battle with the King was never about money. People today still complain about money, when it is really something else that bothers them. We wanted to be free of the King. The people who came here to worship freely and argue morality had no desire to be part of a system that would regard a man as some sort of deity. Our move towards independence, like most things, was just an historical accident. Two different views collided. They had collided before many times, but this time there was a spark that ignited something bigger, something bigger than any of the participants could ever imagine. As a result, a new nation was formed, and the rest is history. We are now allies with our former foes.

On 9/11 a similar collision took place. It was the equivalent of dumping tea in the harbor. They struck at the primary symbol of the empire, they disguised themselves like the natives, they sought to inflict damage quickly and significantly, and they knew it would cause an immediate wrath.

Like most things, the actions of the Boston Tea Party were a mixture of greed and moral wrath. The heavy hand of the empire was creating resentment, morally and economically. The strike back was an expression of that frustration.

If one were to walk the Boston Freedom Trail, one will find next to the Old North Church, where the two lanterns were lit to warn of the impending British advance, a small gift store with a museum of sorts in the back. In the display on the sidewall to the right sits a small vial. It contains tea from the Boston Tea Party. Sitting inches away, on the other side of the display, are some products for sale, all of our political humanity and righteousness resides in that small vial. It is a symbol and expression of our political consciousness. The black liquid in that vial is the blood of our nation. I am amazed that it survived all these years.

The shopkeeper, dealing with the incessant flow of tourists, undoubtedly put this symbol of our democracy next to products for sale in the haste of making do. If I were Christ and that were a temple, I would have overturned the money tables and expressed my rage. But I am not Christ, and it was not a temple, so following the decorum of our day, I went home to write about it. I can speak freely in the hope that someone will listen. That is the essence of our democracy, the willingness to listen.

We have lost our way. Our Declaration contains two fundamentally different views of humanity, yet they were able to coexist. Not in union against a common foe, but in unison for a common vision. This was later expressed as *We the People*.

We have lost our way. The citizenry is unprepared for its duties in our democracy. We have blurred the line between commerce and freedom. Buying and selling has become our cause for living. We are no longer thinking.

We have lost our way. We have become a nation divided. Free commerce has replaced free speech. Our

morality has become politicized and partisan. We have formed separate groups and classes of people. We are smug in our actions.

How is it that men of good will, God-fearing, and blessed with the gifts of freedom should find it so hard to find consensus? How is it that this rancorous nation is the offspring of men who would dare to write the Declaration and the Constitution? How could we be a nation so wise and so scorned that terrorists of hate and suicide could live amongst us for five years and never forgive us our failings?

That is what I have been trying to figure out. The answer lies in listening. The freedom to listen is the habit that makes freedom of speech valuable.

The five Constitutional changes suggested make everyone happy. The Libertarians get small simple government. The Republicans get reduced taxes. The Democrats get social programs. The Unions get workers rights. The Entrepreneurs get easier capital. The small business owner gets fairer competition. The wealthy keep their money. The worker gets a chance to contribute and share in his efforts. The consumer has better regulations and a better marketplace. Our work life will improve, our family life will improve. We will be a better nation for ourselves, and a better example for our world citizens.

I have been listening to anger. There is a lot of anger in our society. Between political parties, amongst political parties, the crime between citizens, over this issue or that. Everyone is convinced of their own morality, has a legitimate complaint, or a crusade of injustice. What is it that holds it all together?

The answer I have found is all based on a moral interpretation to our conflicts. My biggest fear is that people will accept these Constitutional changes without understanding the morality behind them. People always like ideas that feed their belly, I want to feed your mind.

Every decision we make, every choice we state, every opinion we express comes from a well within us that is either black or white. Native Americans would refer to this as the battle between the black wolf and the white wolf. It is the good vs. the evil. It is our free will, our temperament, and our ability to listen. We are all born stupid. We are taught to think for ourselves, or we are taught to not think at all. We are taught to hate or we are taught to love. But no one can teach us about ourselves, that we have to figure out on our own. Since I am a fool, I am going to try anyway.

Every choice you make in your life is between controlling your own fate and controlling the fate of another. This happens in big things and small things. Every action has a reaction, and every reaction has unintended consequences. There is no decision you can make that you can be sure of. You can want it, you can argue it, you can convince others, but you can never be sure about anything. The framers of the Constitution were not even sure if God existed. This, for lack of a better word, is humility.

It is not possible for everyone to be humble all the time. But, it certainly is possible for everyone to understand when they are or are not being humble. We have lots of cultural assumptions regarding our freedoms, etc., we need one desperately regarding humility. Where we should have humility, we have self-reliance. Any greedy action we take can be defended by the concept of self-reliance. Self-reliance is the mask that hides our greed, and we defend both in the same breath. We need to purge both concepts from our

national dialog. We the People are a spirit of community. It requires humility to function effectively. By exercising humility, you can see that all conflicts in our society are between a kill-first and a die-first choice.

The kill-first choice can be recognized by the fire in its eyes, It is cocksure and arrogant. It demands action and defines what that action should be. It will kill, literally, it is steadfast and sure, it will destroy the opposition, it does not seek to understand or reconcile. It demands obedience and compliance.

The die-first choice can be recognized by a calmness in its eyes. It takes a longer view of things. It recognizes the kill-first for what it is, and tries to rectify it by setting an example, prodding, and calm reserve. It listens to the complaint and tries to find consensus, but refuses to become part of the cycle of attack.

Conflict comes about when two kill-first choices combine. It is very hard to practice the humility of die-first when it is needed the most. In our classic battles between the Democrats and Republicans, both assume a kill-first attitude with the other. Both see each other as the enemy, and both have stopped listening to the other speak. Of course, within their own parties, they regard each other with a die-first attitude. They will do anything to help each other, but nothing to help the other guy.

Humility is required to understand the choices that the other person is trying to make. Take the abortion issue for example. The issue is fraught with human tragedy. The woman with the baby makes a kill-first moral choice. The doctor who performs the service makes a die-first moral choice. He puts aside his choice, and performs the service the woman thinks she needs. He treats the mother with die-first and the baby with kill-first choice. The people protesting on the street, have made a kill-first choice in regard to the mother and a die-first choice in regard to the baby. In every case, the conflict is protecting something or someone and a willingness to kill to accomplish it. Conflict is always between two kill first moralities. Consensus is between two die-first choices.

Humility is the expression of a die-first moral choice. It leads to consensus. That is why the Declaration could contain two different ideas regarding the existence of God. (There is not always an answer.) So chances are if you are angry about something, you do not understand the problem. You have failed to listen and you have failed to approach the problem with humility. Anger of course is real. That is why free speech is such an important component in society. It is the expression by someone with a problem and their kill-first solution. The solution then, is whenever someone has a complaint, you listen to them. And of course, whenever you get angry, you hope they will listen to you.

But there is still more. Karl Marx called religion the opium of the people. Today, we have religious conflict. 9/11, abortion, etc. Religion does not seem to make anyone humble anymore, now it is the reason for our battles here and elsewhere. So what happened? What was he describing? He was describing the idea that we should accept our fate, and be ruled over and worked to the bone, and awaits our kingdom in the next life. He saw die-first humility as the problem. Slavery to Utopia suggests the opposite, that we can have the kingdom here, and that our humility is the way to get there. His was a call to arms, mine is a call to thought. He suggests we take to the barricades, I suggest we take to the voting booth.

His ideas had terrible consequences, and they still do. My ideas my have the same ill effect. When I look at

how our nation has evolved, it is only prudent to be cautious about what we say. Ideas matter. In this light I would like to discuss free speech and advertising. Advertising cannot be controlled. It is free speech. But in the process of rearranging our government, if that choice comes to be made, we also need to rearrange the relationship between the media and advertising.

The media has come to dominate our lives. Radio, television, the newspapers, even websites. Areas that should be the collective expression of our humanity and ideas are an incessant commercial. We need to separate our public and cultural affairs from the world of commerce. Fifty cents to have the world delivered to your doorstep in the morning is too cheap. If we pay for the advertising through the products we buy, then it would be better to pay less for the product and more for the newspaper. The constant use of advertising to sell, sell, sell, is what makes us think we cannot survive if people do not buy, buy, buy. Interest is the culprit in this destructive cycle. We have lost our sense of the rhythm of life. We have lost our community, our sense of selves. We are losing allies in the world, and making allies based on the kill-first moral choice to rule and control their societies. We hold up our example of consumption as success, and then we inflate it like a balloon. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. There is less and less inside of value.

Our Muslim adversary has taught me something about ourselves. I listened to his anger. If God exists, we are all his children. If He does not, we are all still brothers. We are all guilty of making kill-first moral choices, the challenge to humanity is to forgive them. In conflict, we need to find a way to lift each other up, rather than to strike the other down. It is a fine line. We need to challenge ourselves and others without doing harm. We need to lead by example too.

Another choice of the founders was to set-up a patent office. In the land of new ideas, it was decided to give some ideas special protection. We have laws against monopolies, but this is a mechanism to promote monopolies. This was expanded to include copy-write. So an idea is free to roam the world, but not the words in which it was written. We have taken our culture of ideas and music and expression and invention and put them in a lock-box of greed, and called it self-reliance. We need to create to a world where there is parity between the work a man does and the award he receives for doing it. We need to end these monopolies, rather than creating a dragon to protect them. Of what danger is humanity if two men share a good idea, and use it for themselves?

We all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. Our plight is no different than theirs. We are not special. We have an opportunity to work together like no society has ever known. We can communicate instantly across the world. Of what use are we going to use this gift? Are we going to spread Love or Hate? Are we going to use it to deliver our kill-first morality or to free our die-first morality? Do we choose to be humble or arrogant? Do we dwell alone in self-reliance or do we become part of a community? Mutual Responsibility frees us all, and empowers us all. It returns our day to a life of meaning, rather than a battle for money. It is the original expression of freedom and humanity in our utopian vision carried forward to our economic life. **It is a way to end our collective slavery, if we, the people, have the courage to choose it.**

## 18. FROM CAT.STEVENS TO CAT.ASTROPHE

Wednesday, 08/27/03

### 1970

The album *Tea for the Tillerman* by Cat Stevens will always be part of my spirit. I was thirteen in 1970 when my older brother brought it home. He was always my window to the world of music. We had a big box of a stereo console that sat in the living room, with a sliding top that revealed the drop style LP player underneath. The speakers were built in, and it was a fine cabinet of wood veneers and polish. This was the family's center of the new stereophonic universe.

I was in the next room when my brother played his latest gem. When the first note emanated from the speakers, I was hooked. And as was the recurring habit of my day, I took possession of the LP and played it repeatedly with the jacket in my hands, following along and singing with the lyrics printed on the back cover. It didn't take long for me to know every word and every musical nuance like an old friend. The spirit and the sentiment of the music spoke to my soul.

And then I grew up. You can't spend your days on the couch listening to music forever. One day I read that Cat Stevens had converted to Islam and was now known as Yusuf Islam. It struck me as odd at the time. Not in a judgmental way, but in a veil of curiosity. Why had this kindred spirit wandered there? On the surface, it wasn't that unusual. The Beatles had introduced us to Ravi Shanker and the Concert for Bangladesh. There had been lots of cross-cultural traffic in the seventies. Cassius Clay was now Muhammad Ali. I was familiar with the writings of Kahil Gilbran, which had been introduced to me by a friend. For the most part, I knew nothing of Islam, and I know very little still.

### 1979

The next time Islam entered my comfortable world was when I was in college, and the students had taken hostages at the American embassy in Iran. In the political turmoil of the time, I remember telling one of my professors that the students were not going to hurt the hostages. He looked at me quizzically, an expression I had never seen before on his wise face before. "I don't know why," I said, "but that is not what this about. They want to talk to us." Looking back, I can now see it was not that much different than the sit-ins on college campuses to protest the Vietnam War, but since it was an international sit-in, and they took hostages, it had global consequences.

### 1989

Enter Salman Rushdie. The Iranian revolution is complete. The fundamentalists have usurped the students' lame protest, as they had planned. The US supported evil regime has been replaced by another evil of their own making. (Do you see any sad Orwellian parallels here? You should.) And who should support the desire to have Salman Rushdie's head handed to him? Why, it's none other than my kindred spirit, Yusuf Islam. How could that be? He must have lost his mind.

I am hardly paying attention. The tide of Muslim rage is cresting around the world, but I am comfortable in mine. The news is a series of catastrophic events, there is little analysis anywhere in mainstream public

media, but I have no fears. We always battle evil, never anything or anyone that is simply different. Once a battle is engaged, listening stops. The victor will proclaim the lesson to be learned.

## 9/11

9/11 arrives. Everyone busies themselves, including me, with flags of patriotic solidarity. But I can't get my mind off of Mohammed Atta. The Pious One is how Osama bin Laden described him. Is this my soulmate, Cat Stevens? How could we be so far apart? He is not Patty Hearst. He was not kidnapped and traumatized. He was successful, recognized and praised. I know he values the same things I do, with the same revolutionary idealism as the students in Iran and in the 60's. Beyond the stupid political choice to choose aggression instead of non-violence, what is this well of frustration and where does it springs from? What, exactly, are Muslims angry about? It is not just Osama and al Qaeda, but the students and the man on the Arab street feel the same way. What is this festering sore, that is now over twenty-five years old?

When we look in the mirror, what do we see? Are we the Queen in Snow White? Do we refuse to see ourselves as we really are? How do the Muslims see us?

## Today

More time passes. I've never read the Satanic Verses. What about it was so controversial, I wonder? One night I do a web search. I discover that Salman is a man of two worlds, both Arab and Western. He occupies the middle ground in critical thinking between religion and science. He is the Islamic equivalent of Voltaire. He is trying to bring The Age of Reason to that religion in the same way that Voltaire challenged Christianity and Catholicism. The guardians of superstition and privileged debauchery equally hate him. He has used their own words against them.

The Muslim world has not signed on to the Age of Reason? Wow, what does that mean? Who were we before the Age of Reason, and why would someone reject it? More specifically, why would someone like Cat Stevens become Yusuf Islam? He is moving backwards where Salman Rushdie would seem to be moving them forward. What am I missing?

## 1984, the novel

This is my guess. George Orwell describes our world very well. We make Peace through War. We change enemies willy-nilly. First we are at war with Afghanistan against Russia, and then we are at war with Russia against Afghanistan. Hate Hour, a staple of life in 1984, is provided by the Clear Channel cartel against the Dixie Chicks. Winston Smith would sit in the Ministry of Truth and re-write history so it would fit the current facts, and the White House and the CIA collude to form the same fiction. In 1984, control of your body was never enough, Big Brother wanted to control your mind. Ann Coulter finds the losing majority guilty of treason, or is it thought crime? Many of us are evidently overdue for a visit to room 101. Once the conversion is complete, we will gleefully agree that  $2+2=5$ , just like Winston Smith did. He is now qualified to work on the economic plan. (And yes, I know, Democrats do some of the same things) Hmmm.....

If you lived in the Age before Reason, what would be your impression of its 200 years of advancement? Compared to its humble beginnings, did it live up to its ideals? Is the wash-water of our culture any better? How many commercials did Thomas Jefferson see and hear? How much gratuitous violence did Thomas Paine watch on television? How much consumption and throwaway culture did Alexander Hamilton

experience? Have we used our gifts wisely?

Sometimes, when I watch the insulting nature our political discourse, I think we should return to the honorable custom of dueling. We have wisely abandoned that practice, but in the Muslim world honor killings are common. What you do, how you act, and the things you say should have consequences. In an Orwellian world, however, one goes through the motions automatonously.\* Why would anyone want to join that? The bookstores are full of guides suggesting one find a simpler life. What refuge would a stranger find here? Our spirits are deadened with each passing generation as we work harder for material comfort.

### **The Cat and the Canary**

Is this what the Muslim world rejects? When Cat Stevens rejected the record machine, was he the canary in the cave? Music is no longer an expression of our culture, it is our battlefield. The corporations, like Big Brother, want to control our humanity. Downloading is a crime. There was no artistic expression in 1984. Freedom was a crime, thinking was a crime. If this is who we are, of what value is the success of our science? The Age of Reason could easily be tried and convicted for the crime of chaos, indifference and stupidity. Sure, the Muslim fundamentalists are equally guilty. Oceania, Eastasia and Eurasia are one and the same, that was Orwell's point. If we are free, are we not then free to stop it?

That question is well over fifty years old. The use of iChat AV, Apple's version of the 1984 telescreen, was first seen in the silent 1927 German film Metropolis. It depicted an Orwellian world of worker slaves, twenty-one years before 1984 was written. The new G5, as beautiful as the engineering is on the inside, fits perfectly into our grey drab Orwellian culture and the Metropolis' stark landscape. Of course, the irony is wonderful. Apple has all its iApps, where there was no individual in 1984 or Metropolis.

The idea that the terrorists Muslims are crazy, jealous or evil does not convince me. They are as mixed up as we are. War is a political choice based on a moral interpretation. Our genocide of the Native Americans was equally steadfast. It is not simply a will to power. It is also an expression of frustration. Our Declaration has a long list of complaints. As a nation, we have been in a perpetual state of war, many of which we started. In 1984, it was never enough to obey Big Brother; you had to love him too. Both the time before the Age of Reason, and the time after The Age of Reason, are the same in that regard. The old Church and the new State demand the same loyalty. We may inhabit different intellectual worlds, but we behave exactly the same.

Since we have had a separation of church and state, our politics are now split on a confused moral interpretation, kill first vs. die first. Compared to the tyranny of moral certainty, our divisive politics are a step forward, but we regard each party with the same moral certainty. We war perpetually against each other, and then we call it freedom. In this light, the Age of Reason is not a better political solution than the era before it. Salman Rushdie has nothing better to offer, and our history proves it.

That frightens me more than the next terror catastrophe. The war on Terror is not against different intellectual systems, we are battling against ourselves. Our enemy has the same blind spot we do. The Age of Reason freed science, which is abundantly clear, because religion had always slowed the investigative process. Our political process, however, has yet to enter the Age of Reason.

The Declaration of Independence ends with these words: we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor. For men who decided to commit treason, these sentiments are not surprising. To suffer defeat, they would lose everything, and they would gladly risk everything to secure victory. This is, ironically, the inverse of the logic of destroying a village to save it.

### **Crossroads**

We sit at yet another crossroad in history. The time may not be of our choosing, and the events are not as clear as we would prefer, but the stakes are no less dear than they were 240 years ago.

We have fallen into the old economic habits we hoped to break. The ink was barely dry on our founding documents when complaints arose about the forming of a new aristocracy. We have also fallen into the same habits of moral certainty. We have replaced religious dogma with The American Way. The political parties are reluctant to question capitalism, checks and balances, self-reliance or the elevation of commerce. At the same time, we turn a blind eye to the problems it causes. We go looking for a scapegoat, or try to cram the facts into a false equation.

We have, for lack of a better word, become King to the world. And like our previous King, we see the planet as our domain of resources. We tax the peoples there, gather their resources and install caretaker governments. We do this, in typical Orwellian fashion, believing it is the best system. I am sure our King expressed the same certainty. But, unlike the old King, we have the disadvantage of the Age of Reason. We use the scientific method to convince ourselves of the sureness of our path, where our adversary still uses moral principles to convince himself of his path.

### **The seed of conflict**

So we are different, that is no excuse for 9/11, nor does it explain why. We know they seem hate everything American. We know we prefer the Age of Reason, but what is it that makes them reject this world? What is the trigger?

I think the trigger is interest.

That current 1% interest rate is the proverbial pebble in a pond that on the far shore is a destructive tidal wave.

Interest is immoral. This was a teaching in the Last Sermon of Mohammed, and he was right.

When you go come into my store and buy something, I pay the credit card company between 2% and 4% for that transaction. Corporate cards, which the credit card companies have been pushing corporations and governments to use in paying vendors is even higher, more like 5% and 6%. Assuming just the 4% rate, I am “borrowing” money at the hefty percentage of 48% annually. If the cardholder does not pay off his card within the month, he may pay a rate as high as 24% annually. Together, the credit card company can make an annual return of 72% annually on the use of their cash. For those who labor to produce the actual goods and services of the economy, this is an onerous tax, much worse than the tax on tea. This is a tax on the transactions that occur, it is ubiquitous.

The credit card companies than take these onerous fees and uses them to pay dividends in the stock market.

Here people want to get a return on their cash beyond the 72%, they hope to get returns in the 100-300% range. The corporations who accept these investments were originally funded by venture capitalists. The VC's are looking for returns in the 1000%+. The net effect of the interest cycle is that it creates a new form of slavery, where everyone, including the corporations, are forced to participate in the system, because interest itself is causing the prices to rise. To protect yourself from rising prices, you seek out a better interest rate return, and the cycle begins itself anew.

Interest, and stocks and dividends, create a false wealth. That is why it is possible to make a million or lose a million overnight.

Interest is also what causes the fast pace in our culture, because to stand still is to fall behind. You cannot manage a business without paying attention to cash flow. You constantly need to be ramping up. This is not due to the change from an agrarian economy to a mechanized economy; it is due to the pressure caused by interest. The same pressure causes and perpetuates the drive for advertising. Sell Sell Sell, because the economy needs everyone to buy buy buy. Once everyone stops buying, the house of cards might implode. I think that was the goal on 9/11.

Of course, the terror attacks cannot work and will not work, because the economy is just too strong. People need to eat everyday. Also, the attack missed the point that the -evil- corporations are themselves now victims of the same interest cycle.

There is a part of American history that I do not know much about, but I do know this. The establishment of the first bank in 1781 was a very big deal, and in the 1830's Andrew Jackson slew the Second National Bank. There was another movement in the late 1800's by the populists to control the banks. The 1930's gave us the Great Depression, and 2001 had foreigners flying planes into our banks. Maybe this messenger has something worth hearing. Maybe, in a shocking way, he has picked up a torch we dropped.

\*Automatic, monotonous, anonymous

# 19. APPLE VS. APPLE: DUMB AND DUMBER

Wednesday, 09/17/03

There are so many things wrong with the development of Apple Records suing Apple Computer AGAIN, which I am at a loss of where to begin. The Helter Skelter insanity of corporate law blurs the line of what is criminal and what is just plain stupid. Let's start here:

## **Dumb: Apple Computer**

Let's face it, the world's best computer company, headed by one of the world's best inventors, building one of the world's greatest inventions, and with the highest paid CEO in the country, does some really dumb things. In the battle between quality and quantity, I will always prefer quality, as I suspect most Mac users do. Apple delivers the best product, but always does it in such a way as to sabotage any chance to gain in quantity and cash. While part of the market share issue has to do with the fact that the product is so good that it lasts forever, most of it has to do with how it positions itself in the marketplace.

The Apple Music store is an astounding success of technology. The company has sold 5 million songs, and made itself a tidy profit of approximately 2 million on a side-line business. By most measures, those profit numbers would be an astounding success too, but not in regard to Apple. Despite sitting on 4 billion dollars in cash, Apple leaves much more cash on the table than it puts in its pocket. The Music Store is an other example of their paradoxical ability. The legal battle with Apple Records, which will cost them a good chunk of the store profit to settle, is just the small potatoes.

When the Music Store was first released, I complained that it excluded small record labels and should have been linked to the radio feature in iTunes. Apple has since then followed a strategy to include independent labels. It is also working on a Windows version of iTunes. No radio link in the plans, as far as I know. As the catalog gets bigger and more users can get in, the numbers of songs sold will continue to soar. Damn, that is one side-line business I wish I could have, and that is exactly the problem. I can't. Apple doesn't empower everyone equally.

As the Music Store collection grows, Apple will be hosting more and more music, streaming more, and picking up all of the associated overhead costs. They will be buying their own servers to sell someone else's product, and their own products will obsolesce and need support, repair, and replacement. Call me crazy, but I thought the reason Apple got into the server market was to sell them, not to buy them from themselves.

Wouldn't it make more sense for Apple to be selling the servers and the technology of the Music Store to the record companies? Shouldn't the label host their own music, and sell their own product directly to their own customers (perhaps via internet radio), at whatever cost they choose? I doubt a lot of independent artists want 99 cents per song; they just want to be heard. Apple has a chance to break the music monopoly, and make more money in the process, and it hasn't, as yet, taken it.

Computer vendors provide back-end support to businesses, not front-side sales. Apple Computer could be

selling hardware and software, both technology products, and charge a licensing fee per song. Instead, it is doing the labels work for them, protecting the political status quo, making less profits, penetrating fewer IT departments, and is being sued for its troubles. Dumb.

### **Apple Records: Dumber**

If Apple Computer is the TECHNOLOGICAL phenomenon of this era, then the Beatles must be the ongoing CULTURAL phenomenon to match it. Apple Records is a company that was born out of the music and political revolution of the Beatles. For a great insight into this corporate experiment, read this post at the MacWorld forum. It is pretty easy to understand why the only long-term political success of the crazed revolutionary 60's was the movement to follow Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead around from town to town sharing music. Comparatively, the Corporate Dead is a manned lunar exploration, where the Corporate Beatles are an episode of the Junkyard Wars hosted by Monty Python.

John Lennon, a poster boy for Apple Computer, preaches revolution and power to the people. Apple Computer, has the goods to actually deliver the power, claims to want to in its ad campaigns, and instead chooses to become a corporate lapdog and protects the music monopoly.

Then, in the irony of all ironies, Apple Computer gets sued by the now unrevolutionary corporate record company it protected, who also chose the same Garden of Eden icon to represent itself. Both are arrogant in protecting something that is not theirs.

Copyright and patent protections are the bane of modern society, and these two conservative false revolutionaries deserve each other, but you and I are going to pay the price of this foolishness. And as we can now see, they do too.

Music is a collaborative process. We claim to protect the artist, when what our laws really do is protect the record manufacturing process by granting them a monopoly. With computers we no longer need manufacturing, but we are still bound and gagged!

If Adam and Eve had a corporate lawyer, maybe they never would have been evicted. If the people had power, you would not need to be reading this. If these two global giants could actually Think Different, or at least share a bite of the apple, then maybe we could leave less to our imagination. I know none of us is perfect, and after all the gifts that both organizations have bestowed on humanity, I feel ungrateful to ask for more. But how about it guys, can the revolution you promised me start now?

The Revolution won't be televised; it'll be on the web. All you have to do is encourage sharing. Jerry has already proven it is possible. Let's do this before my generation passes on.

*Imagine no possessions,  
I wonder if you can,  
No need for greed or hunger,  
A brotherhood of man,  
Imagine all the people*

*Sharing all the world...  
You may say I'm a dreamer,  
But I'm not the only one,  
I hope some day you'll join us,  
And the world will live as one.*

## 20. THE GREAT MODERN AMERICAN COWARD

Wednesday, 09/03/03

In all of us resides the great modern American coward. He is a strange mixture of confidence, fearlessness, moral righteousness and cowardice.

We are, despite those who would profess our perfection and superiority, only human. Our frailty is not unique to our species, but because of our other successes, we may perhaps be blazing a trail unique in the evolution of modern man. America is the vanguard of modern history, and as such, is also the vanguard of the modern man.

The manufacturing revolution, electricity, light, communication, computers and space travel, as well as civil rights, separation of church and state, and due process, all seedlings in the world at large, found fertile land here and grew enormously and quickly. With the good, so too grew the bad. The throwaway pollution, the crime, the selfishness and the cultural trash.

As modern Americans, we are living a contradiction. In an agrarian society, the founders laid the foundation for our modern success with a system of checks and balances and individual freedoms. The power over everyday life resided in the individual. As citizens of a modern world, we are evolving toward a system of entrenched static posturing. Not only is one's control over everyday life slipping away, but free thought is dying along with it too.

Throughout the world, including here, local horrors have waged war against individual societies. Ethnic cleansing, opposition killings, purges and pogroms have all weakened the intelligent in favor of the strong. It is a sad Darwinian drama, but one which gives America yet another advantage in its string of successes. And it is here that the great American cowardice in us reveals itself.

There are plenty of brave people in America. There are lots of men and women willing to run into a burning building, fight crime, work in the military. Doing brave things is fearless. The cowardice I loathe in myself and others is the "go along to get along." We go along with far too much. We risk far too little to protect and improve what we have. We need to dare to sit down on a bus again, to break the blue wall of silence, to expose the backroom deals. We sell ourselves far too cheaply.

Power and money corrupts in concentration. Schools have gotten worse as the unions have gotten stronger. Healthcare has gotten worse as the insurance companies have gotten stronger. Benefits and job security has gotten worse as the businesses have gotten stronger. Pollution has gotten worse as the manufacturers have gotten stronger. Government has gotten worse as the parties have gotten stronger. Egalitarianism, a recognizable impulse in agrarian times, has been buried beneath a mountain of spin, greed and self-indulgence. There is nothing in this country that can't be had for a buck.

Is this really who we want to be? Venture capitalists, day traders, stock brokers? We turn a blind eye to so much, when it would take so little to be greater still. We have erected demi-gods all around us. Individuals and institutions of great power that seek nothing of real value. Shoppers shop for the best deal, clipping coupons like there were valuable freedoms. We gather possessions and squander the wealth of time. Nothing real has value, and the best values are discounted. Freedom 50% off. Liberty 75% off. Oh what savings our cowardice brings. Please, lower my taxes and sell me my liberty at 85% off. I am proud to be a coward, I am proud to be happy.

## 21. AMERICA'S ADDICTION

Thursday, 09/11/03

An addiction is “being abnormally dependent on something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming.” The key to this description is the word “abnormal.” All addictions are unhealthy. America’s addiction started 222 years ago, when the nation’s first bank, the Bank of America, was formed in 1781.

America’s addiction is not to money. Money in some form has been around forever. People work hard to earn their profit. And profit, whether in the form of cash or a harvest, is the fruit of ones labor. Gathering money and profit are one and the same; they are the just rewards for ones effort.

Like alcoholism, or gambling, this addiction takes over our entire physiological system. It feeds on a natural desire, and seems to reward it, when in fact it is sucking the life out of the subject. It leads to selfish destructive behaviors, and a despairing cycle of fits. The subject seeks to regain control, but never can quite come to grasps with oneself.

Those who recognize the symptoms of illness apply varying remedies with limited success. They try to help the victim as well as those affected by the addiction. In the end, it is only the will of the subject that can break this destructive habit. It requires a moment of objective clarity and moral courage to recognize a destructive pattern. The victim must refuse to be enslaved by it anymore. Only then can one walk through the door to a new, healthy, life.

For America, and most of the modern world, this addiction is the acceptance of the interest mechanism in our financial structure. On its surface, interest seems harmless enough.

Interest elevates the value of money. One must now pay another for the time to use their money. As a lender, this habit feels good. One can realize a gain from their harvest simply by time. Imagine gathering a basket of apples, and by not eating it, one then has two baskets. Of course, if one borrowed the apples, the cost of paying them back would be very difficult. The wisdom of the words, “Neither a borrower nor a lender be” becomes readily apparent. But how does this system affect us as a whole?

The gains from interest should reduce any desire to gather new apples; one could simply live off the surplus generated by the existing apples. But there is a problem. Because interest is elevating the value of money, the apples themselves are changing value. It takes more and more money to buy the same apple. We now have inflation. Inflation is a symptom of the interest addiction. To maintain the same amount of apples one started with originally, one must now seek out higher interest rewards. If one owes interest, then one is driven to sell more and more so he can generate enough profits to cover his rising interest debt. The destructive cycle of our addiction is complete. The more we get, the more we need.

Interest has now become entrenched in our economy. Even a casual transaction via credit card has the merchant paying an interest rate as high as 72% annually. (6% swipe rate x 12 months.) On the stock market, investors use their initial investment in hopes of being paid back perpetually, with even higher

rates of return. However, the corporations and the merchants are borrowers. No matter how hard they work, they can never make enough to pay back the investors. These debts are never settled. As a result, it is necessary to constantly squeeze more value from others to generate more profit for the interest debt. The more we sell, the more we need to squeeze others. This makes the corporations look evil when they are the victims of the interest mechanism.

We are all tied to this interest mechanism. If we have no money, we are forced to borrow. If we have lots of money, we are forced to invest it to protect it from inflation. If we work or do not work, we are all squeezed equally. This is a collective addiction.

History has shown that despite the rise of the industrial age and the consumption of vast quantities of the earth's resources, America has not been able to conquer poverty. How is it that we could have once been a nation of self-sufficient farmers, and now that we have machines doing the work we have more disparity in wealth? Interest is the mechanism that causes this imbalance.

The American Revolution was a turning point in mankind's history. The two great revolutions that followed, in Russia and China, both perceived corporations as evil. Our economic imbalance would seem to confirm that interpretation. The people who run corporations are no different than the average person. We are all following the economic model we were born in to. The interest mechanism in our economic model causes our corporations to be predatory to survive.

Interest is a mechanism that automatically steals the fruit of another's labor. The only way to protect oneself is to steal from another. We are all addicted, and because it seems to personally benefit us all, it is masked. We are now engaged in yet another epic battle, but this is really just another symptom of our addiction. The 9/11 attack and our response is, at its heart, a result of our banking system. We are defending the right to gamble for a drink of interest. We have three destructive addictions in the same body.

Before 9/11, this system caused both hot and cold wars and the Great Depression. Our personal lives are one of constant economic duress. We seek to get ahead so we can have a chance to stop. We left the farm for a life that is more difficult, when our new productivity should be making it financially easier. Interest is a disease in our economy, and in the example we set for the world. It is no one's fault. It was institutionalized over 200 years ago. Other original decisions have been corrected; we need to correct this one too.

Every weekday the bell tolls for us. The opening bell on the Big Board at Wall Street is a warning. No nation can survive the onslaught of disease forever. Our bodies, and our empire with it, will wither from addiction. The time has come when we must lock the doors to the Stock Market and step into the daylight of a new world order. It is the only way to break our addiction. We ignore this illness at our peril.

## 22. THE BIG LIE: PATENT AND COPYRIGHT LAW

Thursday, 09/25/03

The Big Lie is usually associated with a despot. Adolf Hitler and Osama Bin Laden come readily to mind. After all, wouldn't it take some sort of lie to move the millions of citizens of various nations to war against each other and between themselves?

The Big Lie I am thinking of does not show itself readily. There is no Potsdam or 9/11, nor does it reveal itself in most religious literature. If it is discussed at all, it is by inference. While the opposite of the Big Lie may be regarded as the Big Truth, the lack of the Big Lie leads to destruction. The Big Lie must be both embraced and unfettered simultaneously. It is a conscious unconsciousness.

We are all exposed to the Big Lie, and usually at a tender age. When we take our first ungainly step, we are gleefully encouraged to take another. We are told we are doing great, when in reality we can barely support our weight. Compared to the day before, when pulling ourselves up to a standing position was a new achievement, it is an advance. We see our own advancement as an accomplishment, and we are told it is an accomplishment, when in reality it is just an ungainly first step. We use this white lie as a form of encouragement, since the lack of the white lie means a lack of encouragement. We all need encouragement to grow and prosper.

This white lie plays itself out in odd ways. We revere our mothers, but it is our birthdays we celebrate, not the anniversary of our mother's labor. We focus our attention on the future, and sever the connection with the past.

In the affairs of society, we all see ourselves as achievers in our own right. We are taught to be self-reliant, an individual, a superman. This is both true and a Big Lie. The fact is, we are nothing without collaboration. Our mother and father collaborated to create a new child. All the learning of the child is based on the child's collaboration with parents, teachers and friends. Nothing man has ever achieved was accomplished without collaboration. Music, science, poetry, even this idea itself, is the result of collaboration with others, both current and long since dead.

Our religious beliefs, whether of Buddha, Moses, Allah or Christ, are based on our collaboration with others, as is any agnostic belief. We are unique as an individual unto ourselves, but within and between each other we are all collaborators. The best we can manage as an individual is a small ungainly step forward. In this context, our image of private property is a Big Lie, since it assumes a new creation without collaboration. American patent and copyright laws are the Big Lie that currently dominates our world culture, and is the underlying source of a great many modern world conflicts, be they Nazi, Communist, or Muslim, all events which took place after the formation of the Patent Office in 1790.

A normal desire to be paid for ones efforts has been re-interpreted as a right to control the flow of

collaboration. We have erected a legal structure that consumes both our foreign and domestic priorities. We criminalize twelve year olds for file swapping, and do not pause to reflect on the rise of teenage suicide terrorists.

We are all collaborators. All the events in today's news are connected. We have created a system that is far worse for society than the inopportune chance that someone may not get paid for work he did not do. The Patent Office should serve as a great intellectual clearing house of our collective genius, instead it serves as the poison of the modern age. It issues a manufacturing monopoly, and ignores the destructive effects of monopoly. Our culture and our health are held hostage to a system of special preference. Medicine and music are the two things most overpriced in our society, and are the two things most necessary after food and shelter.

The spirit of invention, creation, and collaboration has carried us forward for thousands of years. The idea that this would come to a grinding halt without the protections of patent and copyright monopoly is a Big Lie.

## 23. THE CHRISTIAN ASSAULT ON FREEDOM AND CHRISTIANITY

Thursday, 10/02/03

Our jurisprudence system assumes that someone is innocent until proven guilty. We can thank George Mason of Virginia for inspiring the Bill of Rights, and for lobbying for its inclusion in our Constitution. As a new nation, free of the tyranny of a king, it is revealing that Mason felt a declaration of the rights of man were necessary. He had the foresight to recognize that monarchy is not the sole source of tyranny, and that tyranny is often one the basest forms of human nature.

Our legal structure requires recognition that the rights of the individual are paramount to the needs of society. Politically, however, the debate has no rules. We are able to argue the good and bad, and define good and evil, freely. The laws we make constantly breach and are sometimes repelled by Constitutional interpretation, and our social customs are a continuous moral disagreement.

These battles are waged on all sides by historic moral impulses to create a better society. Our nation was settled by those who sought to be free to express their religious views. Freedom of speech serves as the mechanism to allow each person to express his moral opinion primarily, and his political opinion secondarily. Our rich American histories, and our Revolution, are best understood by recognizing the effect of separating church from state.

Since we do not have a state religion, we trust the political process to adjudicate a solution to opposing moral views. This process does not always work properly because one group or another can popularize an idea successfully that is in contrast to the rights of the individual. Many citizens find that the Homeland Security Act oversteps that magical line. In the context of a nation at war, protective measures are common in history. Under the shadow of these difficult times, some seek to advance a separate moral agenda. Our biggest current threat is not from terrorists who destroy life and property, but from conservative Christian moralists who are willing to destroy our democracy to expand their moral interpretation into our laws.

Christianity, freedom and democracy all recognize the individual as paramount. In Christianity, it is the individual's relationship with God. In Freedom, it is the individual's relationship with others. In Democracy, it is the individual's relationship with the state. In all three cases, the individual is free to evolve and is only constrained by actions that have direct consequences on another person. Crime is defined as a public affair, as an action by one individual against another freedom-loving individual. We are innocent of this crime until found guilty by a jury of our peers. We are not guilty of a crime simply because we are accused of one, or because an action is personally sinful.

Some Christians interpret our freedom to affect laws as a right and a self-imposed duty to enforce a moral opinion through those laws. This view is anathema to America and the concept of freedom. The genius of our political system is not to enforce any personal view of morality, but rather to control the effects of every individual's immorality. The tyranny that Mason feared was from those who, in claiming to be their

brother's keeper, would assume the role as their brother's master. The conservative view against drinking, drugs, gays, and abortion all fall into this confused political interpretation. Moral certainty, as expressed politically, is neither Christian, nor American. Both freedom and Christianity requires that the individual be free to pursue his own path on his own timetable. Those who would rush others to reach a conclusion of faulty political wisdom and pure moral behavior have committed a crime against freedom-loving individuals.

The consequences and the toll caused by these self-righteous Christian crusades on our society are clear. In the attempt to stop the perceived immoral actions of a few, we have all suffered. By creating a new definition of criminal behavior, we have become a population under siege and at war. We are imprisoned, attacked, hated, and pressured by a moral debate and interpretation that is against the rights of man and is tyrannical. It is a devil in sheep's clothing, and defines morality with the same moral certainty and superstition as the Taliban in Afghanistan. The desires to ban books, music, and movies (or install 10 Commandment monuments) are part of the same interpretation, just like the cleric commands against flying kites, owning dogs and wearing western clothing. These moral soldiers present themselves as serving God or Allah, when their actions serve neither God nor man. It is an unconscious lust for power, the hallmark of tyranny and evil. The prime commands of Christianity are to love one another (including your enemies,) and to not judge others. Many Christians violate both of these teachings in their political positions on various issues. They fail Christ and destroy democracy in the same action.

Our society has been damaged by Prohibition, the war on drugs, anti-gay bashing, and the pressure against abortion. The individual's acts of drinking, getting high, terminating pregnancies and having sex are all private acts, however tragic, and have no ill effect on society at large. By criminalizing personal failings, we create a government of tyranny. A person is guilty for living, and not for the consequences of his actions toward others. There is a presumption of consequence and guilt, and those who defend the rights of the individual are then accused of being immoral or promoting destructive behaviors. Moral certainty elevates the perceived rights of society above the rights of the individual. Criminalizing personal behaviors sets a standard that no society can ever hope to meet. Even with harsh and difficult punishments against certain behaviors, the "immoral" behaviors continue. It is not possible to legislate morality. The best that can be achieved is a system that accommodates and discourages immorality.

The war on drugs is a complete failure, and like Prohibition, the cure is far worse than the disease. Human sexuality is as old as time. Alternative lifestyles and unwanted pregnancies will not be checked by laws or courts. The just power of moral certainty lies in the culture of taboo. By seeking to create laws against the individual, these moralists weaken the morality they hope to spread, and squander public resources that could be better directed to the ill effects of immoral behaviors.

The conservative moralist may mean well, but in casting stones against other's imperfections, he fails to recognize his own. The Bill of Rights is already a perfect moral political instrument. Thus, any expression of moral certainty is irresponsible, and destroys our democracy and our moral society. In being free to practice and preach the morality we choose, we must be willing to win converts without legal coercion. God does not need the help of the state. Those who would betray the Bill of Rights for religious reasons betray both God and country.

## 24. THE FCC: FEDERAL CHAOS COMMISSION

Tuesday, 10/07/03

In the not too distant past, radio and television were invented. As a tool of instant communication, these discoveries were immediately recognized as a national resource. The government took steps to regulate and administer these airwave technologies in a manner that they thought would best serve our ill-defined “national interest.”

The product of America’s media now dominates the global culture. Our movies are viewed worldwide, product tie-ins are manufactured on the Pacific Rim, and we are, I suspect, the world’s largest consumer and producer of music, despite the rise of file sharing.

Prior to the rise of these technologies, communication was slow and based primarily on the printed word. Actors and musicians were relegated to live performing arts. Musical phonographs, Morse code and the telephone, were the interim technological steps.

While radio and television may seem like the zenith of communication, the web now occupies the future of communication. It returns to a reliance on the written word, but it also combines audio and video. Apple’s iChat AV combines live video and audio. It is the precursor to what will be live, interactive, remote and on-demand audio, video and text communication. The instant polls on many news websites and the experiments in web voting are all indicators of a great technological convergence.

It would be easy to look at the activities these inventions have spawned and say that the licensing of the radio and television resources to the highest bidder has paid off handsomely. Artists have launched careers, masses have been entertained for free, and news reports are worldwide instantly. Our social fabric is immensely richer because of our new ability to communicate.

But, the web also shows us what can occur when a resource is not sold to the highest bidder. The best definition of our national interest is one that promotes democracy and liberty, not business. The bidding process for our airwaves has created a financial need for commerce that has overshadowed the value of democracy and liberty. As consumers of media, we have grown fat and complacent, and are overfed and force-fed large quantities of advertising, which is the inevitable result of the bidding process.

Radio and television offer the opportunity to communicate, but advertising is the least democratic of all human endeavors. Advertising is marginally protected by free speech, and its activity can best be described as one of selling, spin, and lies. As radio and television has become the primary vehicle of political communication, our political debate has taken on the characteristics of advertising. Where we once had a young, intellectual, agrarian nation that supported public education, we have used this new technology to become complacent, ill informed, and divisive.

In the case of radio, we have music samples, which are intended to be sold, interspersed with other ads for other products. Since music content is also a system of monopoly control, what we really have is a situation where the music is free, only if you listen to the commercial messages that it is packaged with. If you listen to the music without the commercial message, then that is considered stealing.

Likewise, television program content is reduced to allow for more ad time. Since advertisers seek more return for their advertising dollar, the content on radio and television becomes more and more narrowly focused to attract a specific demographic group. Rather than promoting democracy, these national treasures continually promote divisions, and the content becomes more and more outrageous to maintain and attract certain viewers and listeners.

Where radio and television should be elevating the level of consensus in our democracy, instead it is guilty of dumbing-down our citizenry, and increasing the partisan divide. Both parties now accuse the media of a bias, and as a solution seek to create a popular format that will promote their own narrow view exclusively. Paid advertising also has the effect of promoting large businesses over small businesses. As the advertising revenue constantly underwrites our artistic culture, small businesses simply do not have the resources to compete equally for airtime. Main Street and the local marketplace are ignored, since the big ad buyers are from Wall Street.

The final insult to the citizenry of this system is that the consumer pays for the price of the advertising he is forced to endure. The cost of advertising is buried in the cost of every item purchased. A highly successful campaign may only net a 3% response for the advertiser, which means that 97% of the people have just had their time stolen from them for no purpose at all. All advertising does is divert a needed purchase from one prospective vendor to another; it increases the volume of products sold only marginally.

The rising tide of anger at unsolicited faxes and telemarketing phone calls needs to be expanded to radio and television commercials and pop-up ads. We are paying dearly for the “free” content we expose ourselves to; it steals our time, our minds, and our liberty. Maybe, if we paid via a subscription for content on the web, radio and television, we would not be so quick to let trash and divisive ideas enter our lives. How much is your life and liberty worth to you? Would you be willing to pay less for the products you buy and more for the information you receive?

I suspect people are more afraid of a society with less advertising than they are of a nation with less liberty. Is this essay worth more than the time you spend with an ad? Send me a dollar and prove me wrong, or a good counter-argument, and I'll send you a dollar:

Steve Consilvio

## 25. THE DEATH OF LIBERTY

Monday, 10/13/03

She is tired and worn. She slaves everyday scrubbing floors, preparing meals, dressing her children, and sending them off into the everyday world of America. She has given birth to a discordant family; Brothers do not speak to brothers, sisters do not speak to sisters. She loves them all, and they all claim to love her, but their love does not reach to each other. Liberty is heartbroken. At the days end, while they sleep, she weeps.

She was once a young and vibrant maiden, and was taken to be the good wife of Moral Courage. Together they had a blissful wedding ceremony. The whole world took notice. And soon after there arrived new-born states which filled their house from sea to shining sea.

Her father, in the person of George Washington, made a farewell toast at their reception:

*“There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.”*

Liberty now lies on her bed. Many years have passed since her loving father’s words were said. He is long dead. She is weak, and consumed by the rancorous flames of her children. Their broth of anger poisons her, but in her weakness is forced to eat from it for strength. Her body withers, the sparkle in her eyes grows dim, and a melancholy engulfs her. The children blame each other more intently as she weakens. One day she will slip away, and succumb to the spiritlessness of the broth.

Laws and lawmakers were once the toast of Liberty, but her father’s wise words went unheeded. The war of separation continues to divide. Words have become muskets, and laws have become battlefields. Goodwill between men is dead. Moral Courage has been slain by an agent of moral certainty. Liberty is a widow, and no good men will stand in her defense.

Tonight our mother will close her eyes for a night of rest. In the morning we will gather at her bedside. We have a choice. To find the spirit of forgiveness and to become a family once again, or to weep quietly and separately when she is gone. The choice we make will be visited upon our children. They will either live with Liberty, or live with her legend.

## 26. OSAMA, HEY SAMA, SAMA SAMA HO

Thursday, 11/13/03

The dictionary definition of the word “hosanna” is ‘a shout of fervent and worshipful praise’, or ‘to express praise or adoration of God.’ This is not something you are likely to hear in the West in regard to Osama bin Laden. But, to a great many people of the world, he is a hero.

He killed thousands of people, did billions of dollars worth of damage, sparked the war on terror and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and inspired or conspired many other attacks. Most people in the West are convinced that he is a madman and must be stopped. While I agree he must be stopped, we will never solve this problem if we view him as a madman. If he is viewed as a hero by others, we may catch him, but someone new will fill his role. His cause will not die with his last breath. Are we to assume all these people are madmen too?

Years ago, a journalist had the opportunity to interview Osama. Upon arrival at the hidden camp, he was given information that most people would usually consider private: checking account and PIN numbers, mortgage information, names and addresses of friends and family. The message was very clear. If the journalist had any notions of being a hero, he would pay the price in more ways than one. Osama knows something we forgot: Keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer.

Because we are convinced that he is an evil madman, we do not respect his intelligence. And intelligence, both of the CIA type, and of the clever type, is at the heart of terrorist success.

We have a huge defense infrastructure, which despite its great expense, is all brawn and no brain. We spent billions bankrupting the Soviet Union, but Osama did billions of dollars of damage with \$20 worth of box-cutters. We go to the other side of the globe to seek weapons of mass destruction, when our intelligent foe can find them at the corner hardware store.

We waste time changing the names of CIA buildings, rather than being concerned about what goes on inside of them. We casually accept arguments about plaques and memorials and compensation, as if the weary dead can be best represented by feel good feel-my-pain sloganeering. As if this intellectual dishonesty wasn't enough, we also have Americans working against Americans, and exposing agents for political vendettas.

Our strategy has been to put a lock on every door. Never-mind all the intelligence failures and double agents of the past, we are to believe more locks will make the difference. We now have a bureaucratic boondoggle, where it is just as likely that we are locking the terrorists IN as we are locking them OUT.

Osama came within minutes of striking the White House and our President with \$5, and we cannot strike him with billions. Our success in catching him, when and if it comes, will still be a sign of our weakness and failures. We have spent our peacetime years developing bunker-buster bombs for an unknown enemy, and had no useful field intelligence with which to use them. This is what our tax dollar purchased. Our

children are shedding their blood to pay for our collective indifference to serious issues.

Our response to 9/11 has been to dissect the al Qaeda organization like a laboratory frog. We trust our scientific method to the point of blindness. The insides of the frog will not reveal what the frog was thinking or feeling. We are so convinced that the ordering of our society is beyond reproach that even the most grotesque of acts will not make us pause to wonder WHY there is so much rising Muslim anger.

Politicians vacillate between an endless discussions of who is to blame for the security failure, to a fear of having any meaningful discussion because it may have political consequences. This inadequacy is ours collectively to bear. It is not a strategic or procedural failure. It is a failure of intelligence, of the raw, objective, philosophical kind.

Our responsibility and duty to the protection and spread of Liberty is a failing grade. We point to Saddam and claim that he flunked the moral test. It is an odd standard we set. If we believe a sovereign nation is not to fit to rule for moral reasons, what then are we to say when Osama holds us accountable to the same subjective standard? We dismiss the UN as a hindrance to the urgency of national interest, and weaken the world's only forum for a discussion of peace between terrorists, tyrants and the free. One would expect the criminals would not want to negotiate, not the defenders of truth and justice.

Perhaps both the terrorist and the tyrant are closer at hand than we would like them to be. I will withhold my alleluia for the intelligent leader who finds the path to peace.

We need a resolution, not just between the Muslims and the west, but between the Israelis and the Palestinians and within the South American nations as well. America is involved in far too many civil wars to claim that it is always an innocent honest broker. Our dependence on oil and our war on drugs have followed similar strategies with similar results. We meddle with the internal affairs of countries to serve our perceived national interest. The willingness to expose our own intelligence agents reveals a fear of complex situations, and the lack of a moral compass. These egregious traits of our government make it impossible to deal with a terrorist threat, or help find a peace for anyone. The process of democracy is working perfectly, as the government does reflect the majority will of the people: angry, self-absorbed and complacent with war. This is the current position of all parties. An intelligent people would not tolerate it.

*“My hope [is] that we have not labored in vain, and that our experiment will still prove that men can be governed by reason.” --Thomas Jefferson to George Mason, 1791.*

## 27. DEBTORS PRISON FOR CONGRESS

Tuesday, 11/18/03

Robert Morris (1733-1806), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, helped save America from defeat in the Revolutionary War. He was the patriot who loaned George Washington \$10,000 for the provisions needed at Valley Forge. At the time, there was no federal treasury.

In 1781, he became the first Superintendent of Finance, and formed the First National Bank. Seventeen years later, in 1798, he was arrested for debts resulting from land speculation around Washington D.C., and put in Debtors Prison. He was liberated with the passage of the National Bankruptcy Law in 1802.

Morris was a patriot, but we need to revisit our banking system of today. Banking is as unwise today, as he was then. The Savings and Loan bailout of the 1980's was caused by the same type of land speculation that Morris bet on 200 years earlier. Interest is a way to manipulate the flow of money, and the stock market is now a global mechanism of speculation. It is a ponzi scheme, which hides under the guise of a system for supplying credit and capital. All of the winning is apparent, and short-lived.

Like all good ponzi schemes, this system is very believable. And with the fear that inflation causes, it seems necessary to invest. The average person now risks their life's savings in this ponzi scheme. Many people in our nation have stopped being productively employed, and instead spend their days trying to outsmart the market. The lesson of Robert Morris, a hard-working patriot, should rest heavily on our shoulders.

America now equates investing with saving. We have had a Great Depression, stock bubbles and bursts, foreigners flying planes into our banks, and two great communist revolutions since the formation of the Federal Reserve. Perhaps, the problems of the last 100 years were caused 200 years ago. The problem is the Interest Mechanism itself.

Since the closing of the debtors' prisons, interest became a way to cover the cost of non-payment. One is still free while in debt, but the debt keeps increasing.

Deadbeat dads are now finding themselves in prison for failing to pay child support. The time has come to apply the same laws to Congress. A budget deficit of \$347 Billion is a world without consequences. Numbers no longer have any meaning. The National Debt is in the trillions and long past overdue. The fraud on Wall Street makes the situation worse, but the real problem lies with the Federal Reserve.

The entire Congress, and the President too, should be put into a Debtors Prison. A year of Jubilee, the forgiveness of all debts, is needed worldwide. A modern solution to the age-old problem of credit and capital can end the war of terror and bring about peace. The current system is a mathematical fraud and serves no one. This is not a time for patriots to get cold feet.

## 28. XTREMEMAC GET CONNECTED KIT

### Review

Monday, 12/08/03

Get Connected Kit for new iPod  
Company: Xtreme Accessories, LLC.  
Price: \$49.95  
<http://www.xtrememac.com>

When my .Mac membership came up for renewal, I had a choice of a few different incentives. I chose the \$20 credit from the Apple Store. I desperately needed an auto charger for my iPod.

A visit to the Apple store showed just the thing I needed for 19.95, but I was also thinking about replacing the auto cassette adaptor too. It was making a loud grinding noise and was irritating. Sometimes you could hear it over the music, like a mysterious bad musician. The cassette adapter came from an old portable CD player that has a lot of attachments. It also had an audio cable that I hooked up my Dock to, and was running the iPod through the kitchen radio. This is my iPod's home base, and it made my kitchen radio, a Zenith Bose-wannabe, sound much better. And of course, no commercials!

The XtremeMac Get connected kit had what I needed for the car, plus a replacement cable for the kitchen radio, another adaptor that would hook up to my stereo, an extension cable, plus a line splitter so two people could listen through headphones to the same iPod. The last would be good if I ever get back to the gym with my wife, and we manage to agree on the same music selection (not likely.)

The cost of the kit is \$49.95, with the \$20 incentive and shipping it cost me around \$35. It arrived a few days later via FedEx.

The first thing I did was hook my iPod up to the home stereo. Very cool! No more digging for CD's. And now I understood why they shipped an extension cord. If I wanted to bother, I could run the cord directly to my Mac, and run the stereo out of iTunes.

I then replaced the kitchen radio cord with the gold-tipped cable. I tried swapping back and forth a few times to see if I could notice an appreciable audio difference. I was hard to tell, but I would say yes. The cable did make my iPod sound better, even on my cheap radio.

Next up, the car. I popped out the old cassette adaptor, inserted in the new. Plugged in the lighter adaptor, hooked up the iPod and was ready to go. I started up the iPod, turned the volume down to see if I could hear anything: Nothing! The mysterious bad musician had played his last note.

The auto cassette adaptor is quiet. No more dead iPod discoveries in the car. The kitchen radio sounds better. The home stereo can pump music for hours on end (I need to work on some playlists.) And I still have expansion capabilities when and if the need should arrive. I'd say the kit was well worth the asking

price. I do wish it came in black, but it only comes in white. And, if you are a Dock user, be aware that the adaptor to the iPod from the auto battery charger requires you to squeeze the sides to release the catch. The other day it “stuck” on me. I had been squeezing it unconsciously and never realized that the lever was there.

The other thing of note is that the cable to the car charger is coiled. In my car, everything is close and tight: cassette, charger, and place to put my iPod. I can lift the iPod to read it without any trouble, but your car may be different, and you might not prefer to have a coiled cable. I do find it odd that one is cabled and the other is not, since they are both connected to the iPod when you move it.

It would be nice if someone would make a holster that simplified the cabling, but there is nothing like that on the market as far as I now. As is, you end up with a cable at the top and another at the bottom of the iPod.

The free iPods that came with a VW bug seem to use the same setup. My old car had an audio input jack, but the new cars do not seem to have one. I suspect we will see that jack port come back as the popularity of the iPod-like devices grow.

The kit includes:

- Xwire Gold iShare Earbud Splitter
- Xwire Gold Male/Male Audio Cables
- Xwire Gold Male/Female Cables
- Xwire Gold RCA Audio Cable
- Premium iPod Car Charger
- iPod Cassette Adapter

For more info visit [www.xtrememac.com](http://www.xtrememac.com) Like all fine American products it is made in China.

## 29. GREAT BLOGS OF FIRE!

Well well well, isn't this a nice thing. Quick ramblings that go from my head to the front page. Does Tim know what danger lurks in giving us writers so much power?

Well, I will try my best to be responsible with this gift. Hopefully, such absolute power will not corrupt myself absolutely.

I think I will take this opportunity to discuss "Silence." Silence is not found in nature, It is entirely man-made. Usually it is found in a man-made building, where it is possible to lock out the sounds of nature. It then comes about from one of two things, either isolation or cooperation. In isolation we are alone. In cooperation, we work together to be silent to hear the performance of an individual.

The web, and blogs and forums in particular, provide a third realm, where it is possible to cooperate while in isolation. To share and to learn from each other is a great thing. The performance is usually written, not spoken, but that is rapidly changing with animations, video and audio.

We will all be alive for too short a time to experience everything ourselves firsthand. The ability to share and learn from each other is the best thing we have.

I am sure that I speak for all the writers here when I say that we welcome your feedback, comments, and contributions.

Recently I got a complimentary e-mail that said mymac.com was a New Yorker magazine for the common man. I always thought the New Yorker was for the common man, since my late Uncle Jimmy used to read it.

Uncle Jimmy was born in Italy, and worked hard all his life. A blue-collar guy if there ever was one. I remember visting him once and he was covered in flour. He was in his eighties and still working as a baker. He would rail against FDR like the New Deal was written yesterday. He said "you cannot pay people to do nothing." It was, interestingly, both a moral and an economic view. Idle hands being the devil's workshop and all.

When I view my own writings, it is easy to see that the my apples don't fall far from my family tree. Of course, I think I know something that he didn't: The Interest Mechanism. Interest is the ultimate way of getting paid for doing nothing.

Idleness can occur at both ends of the wealth spectrum. What makes societies strong is the middle-class, and people like Uncle Jimmy. America is losing its strength, and one only needs to look at Brazil and central America and around the world to see our children's future. The murders today in a gated community in Brazil of Shell Oil employees shows that money cannot buy everything.

The new American Dream to become a millionaire and/or retire early based on investments (rather than savings) is not one Uncle Jimmy held. This new dream appears to save us from our isolation, but it is destroying us at the same time. It is not a simple problem to solve, but it is solvable. All it takes is cooperation.

On this topic, I will never be silent.

## 30. WAR IS A RACKET (BY GENERAL SMEDLEY BUTLER)

### Introduced by Steve Consilvio

This general won two Congressional Medals of Honor, and after retiring in 1933 summarized his experience like this:

*I suspected I was just part of a racket at the time. Now I am sure of it. Like all the members of the military profession, I never had a thought of my own until I left the service. My mental faculties remained in suspended animation while I obeyed the orders of higher-ups. This is typical with everyone in the military service.*

*I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912 (where have I heard that name before?). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.*

*During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.....*

<b>I invite you to read his essay in the forums. I have placed it under the Politics thread.</b> <A HREF="http://www.behappyandfree.com/index.php?option=articles&Itemid=3&topid=2">here</A> (the link will go to my personal blog, until the forums are fixed. See "Other people's essays.")

It is a little long, but well worth reading. Our families and friends are at risk in foreign lands, we should consider the reasons why.

Today we seem to be in the same historical position as we were 70 years ago. Those creators of history are all long dead. but maybe we can change our future this time, instead of repeating past mistakes. This story sounds all too familiar, even without the anticipation of nuclear weapons.

While I see the trigger for corporate behavior as stemming from the interest mechanism and the monopolies issued by the Patent Office, the effect of corporate behavior would appear to be unchanged. We The People bear the consequences. There is no refuge from ourselves.

## CHAPTER ONE

### War Is A Racket

WAR is a racket. It always has been.

It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.

A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.

In the World War [I] a mere handful garnered the profits of the conflict. At least 21,000 new millionaires and billionaires were made in the United States during the World War. That many admitted their huge blood gains in their income tax returns. How many other war millionaires falsified their tax returns no one knows.

How many of these war millionaires shouldered a rifle? How many of them dug a trench? How many of them knew what it meant to go hungry in a rat-infested dug-out? How many of them spent sleepless, frightened nights, ducking shells and shrapnel and machine gun bullets? How many of them parried a bayonet thrust of an enemy? How many of them were wounded or killed in battle?

Out of war nations acquire additional territory, if they are victorious. They just take it. This newly acquired territory promptly is exploited by the few -- the selfsame few who wrung dollars out of blood in the war. The general public shoulders the bill.

And what is this bill?

This bill renders a horrible accounting. Newly placed gravestones. Mangled bodies. Shattered minds. Broken hearts and homes. Economic instability. Depression and all its attendant miseries. Back-breaking taxation for generations and generations.

For a great many years, as a soldier, I had a suspicion that war was a racket; not until I retired to civil life did I fully realize it. Now that I see the international war clouds gathering, as they are today, I must face it and speak out.

Again they are choosing sides. France and Russia met and agreed to stand side by side. Italy and Austria hurried to make a similar agreement. Poland and Germany cast sheep's eyes at each other, forgetting for the nonce [one unique occasion], their dispute over the Polish Corridor.

The assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia [Yugoslavia] complicated matters. Yugoslavia and Hungary, long bitter enemies, were almost at each other's throats. Italy was ready to jump in. But France was waiting. So was Czechoslovakia. All of them are looking ahead to war. Not the people -- not those who

fight and pay and die -- only those who foment wars and remain safely at home to profit.

There are 40,000,000 men under arms in the world today, and our statesmen and diplomats have the temerity to say that war is not in the making.

Hell's bells! Are these 40,000,000 men being trained to be dancers?

Not in Italy, to be sure. Premier Mussolini knows what they are being trained for. He, at least, is frank enough to speak out. Only the other day, Il Duce in "International Conciliation," the publication of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said:

"And above all, Fascism, the more it considers and observes the future and the development of humanity quite apart from political considerations of the moment, believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. . . . War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it."

Undoubtedly Mussolini means exactly what he says. His well-trained army, his great fleet of planes, and even his navy are ready for war -- anxious for it, apparently. His recent stand at the side of Hungary in the latter's dispute with Yugoslavia showed that. And the hurried mobilization of his troops on the Austrian border after the assassination of Dollfuss showed it too. There are others in Europe too whose sabre rattling presages war, sooner or later.

Herr Hitler, with his rearming Germany and his constant demands for more and more arms, is an equal if not greater menace to peace. France only recently increased the term of military service for its youth from a year to eighteen months.

Yes, all over, nations are camping in their arms. The mad dogs of Europe are on the loose. In the Orient the maneuvering is more adroit. Back in 1904, when Russia and Japan fought, we kicked out our old friends the Russians and backed Japan. Then our very generous international bankers were financing Japan. Now the trend is to poison us against the Japanese. What does the "open door" policy to China mean to us? Our trade with China is about \$90,000,000 a year. Or the Philippine Islands? We have spent about \$600,000,000 in the Philippines in thirty-five years and we (our bankers and industrialists and speculators) have private investments there of less than \$200,000,000.

Then, to save that China trade of about \$90,000,000, or to protect these private investments of less than \$200,000,000 in the Philippines, we would be all stirred up to hate Japan and go to war -- a war that might well cost us tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of lives of Americans, and many more hundreds of thousands of physically maimed and mentally unbalanced men.

Of course, for this loss, there would be a compensating profit -- fortunes would be made. Millions and billions of dollars would be piled up. By a few. Munitions makers. Bankers. Ship builders. Manufacturers. Meat packers. Speculators. They would fare well.

Yes, they are getting ready for another war. Why shouldn't they? It pays high dividends.

But what does it profit the men who are killed? What does it profit their mothers and sisters, their wives and their sweethearts? What does it profit their children?

What does it profit anyone except the very few to whom war means huge profits?

Yes, and what does it profit the nation?

Take our own case. Until 1898 we didn't own a bit of territory outside the mainland of North America. At that time our national debt was a little more than \$1,000,000,000. Then we became "internationally minded." We forgot, or shunted aside, the advice of the Father of our country. We forgot George Washington's warning about "entangling alliances." We went to war. We acquired outside territory. At the end of the World War period, as a direct result of our fiddling in international affairs, our national debt had jumped to over \$25,000,000,000. Our total favorable trade balance during the twenty-five-year period was about \$24,000,000,000. Therefore, on a purely bookkeeping basis, we ran a little behind year for year, and that foreign trade might well have been ours without the wars.

It would have been far cheaper (not to say safer) for the average American who pays the bills to stay out of foreign entanglements. For a very few this racket, like bootlegging and other underworld rackets, brings fancy profits, but the cost of operations is always transferred to the people -- who do not profit.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Who Makes The Profits?**

The World War, rather our brief participation in it, has cost the United States some \$52,000,000,000. Figure it out. That means \$400 to every American man, woman, and child. And we haven't paid the debt yet. We are paying it, our children will pay it, and our children's children probably still will be paying the cost of that war.

The normal profits of a business concern in the United States are six, eight, ten, and sometimes twelve percent. But war-time profits -- ah! that is another matter -- twenty, sixty, one hundred, three hundred, and even eighteen hundred per cent -- the sky is the limit. All that traffic will bear. Uncle Sam has the money. Let's get it.

Of course, it isn't put that crudely in war time. It is dressed into speeches about patriotism, love of country, and "we must all put our shoulders to the wheel," but the profits jump and leap and skyrocket -- and are safely pocketed. Let's just take a few examples:

Take our friends the du Ponts, the powder people -- didn't one of them testify before a Senate committee recently that their powder won the war? Or saved the world for democracy? Or something? How did they

do in the war? They were a patriotic corporation. Well, the average earnings of the du Ponts for the period 1910 to 1914 were \$6,000,000 a year. It wasn't much, but the du Ponts managed to get along on it. Now let's look at their average yearly profit during the war years, 1914 to 1918. Fifty-eight million dollars a year profit we find! Nearly ten times that of normal times, and the profits of normal times were pretty good. An increase in profits of more than 950 per cent.

Take one of our little steel companies that patriotically shunted aside the making of rails and girders and bridges to manufacture war materials. Well, their 1910-1914 yearly earnings averaged \$6,000,000. Then came the war. And, like loyal citizens, Bethlehem Steel promptly turned to munitions making. Did their profits jump -- or did they let Uncle Sam in for a bargain? Well, their 1914-1918 average was \$49,000,000 a year!

Or, let's take United States Steel. The normal earnings during the five-year period prior to the war were \$105,000,000 a year. Not bad. Then along came the war and up went the profits. The average yearly profit for the period 1914-1918 was \$240,000,000. Not bad.

There you have some of the steel and powder earnings. Let's look at something else. A little copper, perhaps. That always does well in war times.

Anaconda, for instance. Average yearly earnings during the pre-war years 1910-1914 of \$10,000,000. During the war years 1914-1918 profits leaped to \$34,000,000 per year.

Or Utah Copper. Average of \$5,000,000 per year during the 1910-1914 period. Jumped to an average of \$21,000,000 yearly profits for the war period.

Let's group these five, with three smaller companies. The total yearly average profits of the pre-war period 1910-1914 were \$137,480,000. Then along came the war. The average yearly profits for this group skyrocketed to \$408,300,000.

A little increase in profits of approximately 200 per cent.

Does war pay? It paid them. But they aren't the only ones. There are still others. Let's take leather.

For the three-year period before the war the total profits of Central Leather Company were \$3,500,000. That was approximately \$1,167,000 a year. Well, in 1916 Central Leather returned a profit of \$15,000,000, a small increase of 1,100 per cent. That's all. The General Chemical Company averaged a profit for the three years before the war of a little over \$800,000 a year. Came the war, and the profits jumped to \$12,000,000. a leap of 1,400 per cent.

International Nickel Company -- and you can't have a war without nickel -- showed an increase in profits from a mere average of \$4,000,000 a year to \$73,000,000 yearly. Not bad? An increase of more than 1,700 per cent.

American Sugar Refining Company averaged \$2,000,000 a year for the three years before the war. In 1916

a profit of \$6,000,000 was recorded.

Listen to Senate Document No. 259. The Sixty-Fifth Congress, reporting on corporate earnings and government revenues. Considering the profits of 122 meat packers, 153 cotton manufacturers, 299 garment makers, 49 steel plants, and 340 coal producers during the war. Profits under 25 per cent were exceptional. For instance the coal companies made between 100 per cent and 7,856 per cent on their capital stock during the war. The Chicago packers doubled and tripled their earnings.

And let us not forget the bankers who financed the great war. If anyone had the cream of the profits it was the bankers. Being partnerships rather than incorporated organizations, they do not have to report to stockholders. And their profits were as secret as they were immense. How the bankers made their millions and their billions I do not know, because those little secrets never become public -- even before a Senate investigatory body.

But here's how some of the other patriotic industrialists and speculators chiseled their way into war profits.

Take the shoe people. They like war. It brings business with abnormal profits. They made huge profits on sales abroad to our allies. Perhaps, like the munitions manufacturers and armament makers, they also sold to the enemy. For a dollar is a dollar whether it comes from Germany or from France. But they did well by Uncle Sam too. For instance, they sold Uncle Sam 35,000,000 pairs of hobnailed service shoes. There were 4,000,000 soldiers. Eight pairs, and more, to a soldier. My regiment during the war had only one pair to a soldier. Some of these shoes probably are still in existence. They were good shoes. But when the war was over Uncle Sam has a matter of 25,000,000 pairs left over. Bought -- and paid for. Profits recorded and pocketed.

There was still lots of leather left. So the leather people sold your Uncle Sam hundreds of thousands of McClellan saddles for the cavalry. But there wasn't any American cavalry overseas! Somebody had to get rid of this leather, however. Somebody had to make a profit in it -- so we had a lot of McClellan saddles. And we probably have those yet.

Also somebody had a lot of mosquito netting. They sold your Uncle Sam 20,000,000 mosquito nets for the use of the soldiers overseas. I suppose the boys were expected to put it over them as they tried to sleep in muddy trenches -- one hand scratching cooties on their backs and the other making passes at scurrying rats. Well, not one of these mosquito nets ever got to France!

Anyhow, these thoughtful manufacturers wanted to make sure that no soldier would be without his mosquito net, so 40,000,000 additional yards of mosquito netting were sold to Uncle Sam.

There were pretty good profits in mosquito netting in those days, even if there were no mosquitoes in France. I suppose, if the war had lasted just a little longer, the enterprising mosquito netting manufacturers would have sold your Uncle Sam a couple of consignments of mosquitoes to plant in France so that more mosquito netting would be in order.

Airplane and engine manufacturers felt they, too, should get their just profits out of this war. Why not?

Everybody else was getting theirs. So \$1,000,000,000 -- count them if you live long enough -- was spent by Uncle Sam in building airplane engines that never left the ground! Not one plane, or motor, out of the billion dollars worth ordered, ever got into a battle in France. Just the same the manufacturers made their little profit of 30, 100, or perhaps 300 per cent.

Undershirts for soldiers cost 14¢ [cents] to make and Uncle Sam paid 30¢ to 40¢ each for them -- a nice little profit for the undershirt manufacturer. And the stocking manufacturer and the uniform manufacturers and the cap manufacturers and the steel helmet manufacturers -- all got theirs.

Why, when the war was over some 4,000,000 sets of equipment -- knapsacks and the things that go to fill them -- crammed warehouses on this side. Now they are being scrapped because the regulations have changed the contents. But the manufacturers collected their wartime profits on them -- and they will do it all over again the next time.

There were lots of brilliant ideas for profit making during the war.

One very versatile patriot sold Uncle Sam twelve dozen 48-inch wrenches. Oh, they were very nice wrenches. The only trouble was that there was only one nut ever made that was large enough for these wrenches. That is the one that holds the turbines at Niagara Falls. Well, after Uncle Sam had bought them and the manufacturer had pocketed the profit, the wrenches were put on freight cars and shunted all around the United States in an effort to find a use for them. When the Armistice was signed it was indeed a sad blow to the wrench manufacturer. He was just about to make some nuts to fit the wrenches. Then he planned to sell these, too, to your Uncle Sam.

Still another had the brilliant idea that colonels shouldn't ride in automobiles, nor should they even ride on horseback. One has probably seen a picture of Andy Jackson riding in a buckboard. Well, some 6,000 buckboards were sold to Uncle Sam for the use of colonels! Not one of them was used. But the buckboard manufacturer got his war profit.

The shipbuilders felt they should come in on some of it, too. They built a lot of ships that made a lot of profit. More than \$3,000,000,000 worth. Some of the ships were all right. But \$635,000,000 worth of them were made of wood and wouldn't float! The seams opened up -- and they sank. We paid for them, though. And somebody pocketed the profits.

It has been estimated by statisticians and economists and researchers that the war cost your Uncle Sam \$52,000,000,000. Of this sum, \$39,000,000,000 was expended in the actual war itself. This expenditure yielded \$16,000,000,000 in profits. That is how the 21,000 billionaires and millionaires got that way. This \$16,000,000,000 profits is not to be sneezed at. It is quite a tidy sum. And it went to a very few.

The Senate (Nye) committee probe of the munitions industry and its wartime profits, despite its sensational disclosures, hardly has scratched the surface.

Even so, it has had some effect. The State Department has been studying "for some time" methods of keeping out of war. The War Department suddenly decides it has a wonderful plan to spring. The

Administration names a committee -- with the War and Navy Departments ably represented under the chairmanship of a Wall Street speculator -- to limit profits in war time. To what extent isn't suggested. Hmm. Possibly the profits of 300 and 600 and 1,600 per cent of those who turned blood into gold in the World War would be limited to some smaller figure.

Apparently, however, the plan does not call for any limitation of losses -- that is, the losses of those who fight the war. As far as I have been able to ascertain there is nothing in the scheme to limit a soldier to the loss of but one eye, or one arm, or to limit his wounds to one or two or three. Or to limit the loss of life.

There is nothing in this scheme, apparently, that says not more than 12 per cent of a regiment shall be wounded in battle, or that not more than 7 per cent in a division shall be killed.

Of course, the committee cannot be bothered with such trifling matters.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Who Pays The Bills?

Who provides the profits -- these nice little profits of 20, 100, 300, 1,500 and 1,800 per cent? We all pay them -- in taxation. We paid the bankers their profits when we bought Liberty Bonds at \$100.00 and sold them back at \$84 or \$86 to the bankers. These bankers collected \$100 plus. It was a simple manipulation. The bankers control the security marts. It was easy for them to depress the price of these bonds. Then all of us -- the people -- got frightened and sold the bonds at \$84 or \$86. The bankers bought them. Then these same bankers stimulated a boom and government bonds went to par -- and above. Then the bankers collected their profits.

But the soldier pays the biggest part of the bill.

If you don't believe this, visit the American cemeteries on the battlefields abroad. Or visit any of the veteran's hospitals in the United States. On a tour of the country, in the midst of which I am at the time of this writing, I have visited eighteen government hospitals for veterans. In them are a total of about 50,000 destroyed men -- men who were the pick of the nation eighteen years ago. The very able chief surgeon at the government hospital; at Milwaukee, where there are 3,800 of the living dead, told me that mortality among veterans is three times as great as among those who stayed at home.

Boys with a normal viewpoint were taken out of the fields and offices and factories and classrooms and put into the ranks. There they were remolded; they were made over; they were made to "about face"; to regard murder as the order of the day. They were put shoulder to shoulder and, through mass psychology, they were entirely changed. We used them for a couple of years and trained them to think nothing at all of killing or of being killed.

Then, suddenly, we discharged them and told them to make another “about face” ! This time they had to do their own readjustment, sans [without] mass psychology, sans officers’ aid and advice and sans nationwide propaganda. We didn’t need them any more. So we scattered them about without any “three-minute” or “Liberty Loan” speeches or parades. Many, too many, of these fine young boys are eventually destroyed, mentally, because they could not make that final “about face” alone.

In the government hospital in Marion, Indiana, 1,800 of these boys are in pens! Five hundred of them in a barracks with steel bars and wires all around outside the buildings and on the porches. These already have been mentally destroyed. These boys don’t even look like human beings. Oh, the looks on their faces! Physically, they are in good shape; mentally, they are gone.

There are thousands and thousands of these cases, and more and more are coming in all the time. The tremendous excitement of the war, the sudden cutting off of that excitement -- the young boys couldn’t stand it.

That’s a part of the bill. So much for the dead -- they have paid their part of the war profits. So much for the mentally and physically wounded -- they are paying now their share of the war profits. But the others paid, too -- they paid with heartbreaks when they tore themselves away from their firesides and their families to don the uniform of Uncle Sam -- on which a profit had been made. They paid another part in the training camps where they were regimented and drilled while others took their jobs and their places in the lives of their communities. They paid for it in the trenches where they shot and were shot; where they were hungry for days at a time; where they slept in the mud and the cold and in the rain -- with the moans and shrieks of the dying for a horrible lullaby.

But don’t forget -- the soldier paid part of the dollars and cents bill too.

Up to and including the Spanish-American War, we had a prize system, and soldiers and sailors fought for money. During the Civil War they were paid bonuses, in many instances, before they went into service. The government, or states, paid as high as \$1,200 for an enlistment. In the Spanish-American War they gave prize money. When we captured any vessels, the soldiers all got their share -- at least, they were supposed to. Then it was found that we could reduce the cost of wars by taking all the prize money and keeping it, but conscripting [drafting] the soldier anyway. Then soldiers couldn’t bargain for their labor, Everyone else could bargain, but the soldier couldn’t.

Napoleon once said,

“All men are enamored of decorations . . . they positively hunger for them.”

So by developing the Napoleonic system -- the medal business -- the government learned it could get soldiers for less money, because the boys liked to be decorated. Until the Civil War there were no medals. Then the Congressional Medal of Honor was handed out. It made enlistments easier. After the Civil War no new medals were issued until the Spanish-American War.

In the World War, we used propaganda to make the boys accept conscription. They were made to feel

ashamed if they didn't join the army.

So vicious was this war propaganda that even God was brought into it. With few exceptions our clergymen joined in the clamor to kill, kill, kill. To kill the Germans. God is on our side . . . it is His will that the Germans be killed.

And in Germany, the good pastors called upon the Germans to kill the allies . . . to please the same God. That was a part of the general propaganda, built up to make people war conscious and murder conscious.

Beautiful ideals were painted for our boys who were sent out to die. This was the "war to end all wars." This was the "war to make the world safe for democracy." No one mentioned to them, as they marched away, that their going and their dying would mean huge war profits. No one told these American soldiers that they might be shot down by bullets made by their own brothers here. No one told them that the ships on which they were going to cross might be torpedoed by submarines built with United States patents. They were just told it was to be a "glorious adventure."

Thus, having stuffed patriotism down their throats, it was decided to make them help pay for the war, too. So, we gave them the large salary of \$30 a month.

All they had to do for this munificent sum was to leave their dear ones behind, give up their jobs, lie in swampy trenches, eat canned willy (when they could get it) and kill and kill and kill . . . and be killed.

But wait!

Half of that wage (just a little more than a riveter in a shipyard or a laborer in a munitions factory safe at home made in a day) was promptly taken from him to support his dependents, so that they would not become a charge upon his community. Then we made him pay what amounted to accident insurance -- something the employer pays for in an enlightened state -- and that cost him \$6 a month. He had less than \$9 a month left.

Then, the most crowning insolence of all -- he was virtually blackjacked into paying for his own ammunition, clothing, and food by being made to buy Liberty Bonds. Most soldiers got no money at all on pay days.

We made them buy Liberty Bonds at \$100 and then we bought them back -- when they came back from the war and couldn't find work -- at \$84 and \$86. And the soldiers bought about \$2,000,000,000 worth of these bonds!

Yes, the soldier pays the greater part of the bill. His family pays too. They pay it in the same heart-break that he does. As he suffers, they suffer. At nights, as he lay in the trenches and watched shrapnel burst about him, they lay home in their beds and tossed sleeplessly -- his father, his mother, his wife, his sisters, his brothers, his sons, and his daughters.

When he returned home minus an eye, or minus a leg or with his mind broken, they suffered too -- as

much as and even sometimes more than he. Yes, and they, too, contributed their dollars to the profits of the munitions makers and bankers and shipbuilders and the manufacturers and the speculators made. They, too, bought Liberty Bonds and contributed to the profit of the bankers after the Armistice in the hocus-focus of manipulated Liberty Bond prices.

And even now the families of the wounded men and of the mentally broken and those who never were able to readjust themselves are still suffering and still paying.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### How To Smash This Racket!

WELL, it's a racket, all right.

A few profit -- and the many pay. But there is a way to stop it. You can't end it by disarmament conferences. You can't eliminate it by peace parleys at Geneva. Well-meaning but impractical groups can't wipe it out by resolutions. It can be smashed effectively only by taking the profit out of war.

The only way to smash this racket is to conscript capital and industry and labor before the nations manhood can be conscripted. One month before the Government can conscript the young men of the nation -- it must conscript capital and industry and labor. Let the officers and the directors and the high-powered executives of our armament factories and our munitions makers and our shipbuilders and our airplane builders and the manufacturers of all the other things that provide profit in war time as well as the bankers and the speculators, be conscripted -- to get \$30 a month, the same wage as the lads in the trenches get.

Let the workers in these plants get the same wages -- all the workers, all presidents, all executives, all directors, all managers, all bankers -- yes, and all generals and all admirals and all officers and all politicians and all government office holders -- everyone in the nation be restricted to a total monthly income not to exceed that paid to the soldier in the trenches!

Let all these kings and tycoons and masters of business and all those workers in industry and all our senators and governors and majors pay half of their monthly \$30 wage to their families and pay war risk insurance and buy Liberty Bonds.

Why shouldn't they?

They aren't running any risk of being killed or of having their bodies mangled or their minds shattered. They aren't sleeping in muddy trenches. They aren't hungry. The soldiers are!

Give capital and industry and labor thirty days to think it over and you will find, by that time, there will be

no war. That will smash the war racket -- that and nothing else.

Maybe I am a little too optimistic. Capital still has some say. So capital won't permit the taking of the profit out of war until the people -- those who do the suffering and still pay the price -- make up their minds that those they elect to office shall do their bidding, and not that of the profiteers.

Another step necessary in this fight to smash the war racket is the limited plebiscite to determine whether a war should be declared. A plebiscite not of all the voters but merely of those who would be called upon to do the fighting and dying. There wouldn't be very much sense in having a 76-year-old president of a munitions factory or the flat-footed head of an international banking firm or the cross-eyed manager of a uniform manufacturing plant -- all of whom see visions of tremendous profits in the event of war -- voting on whether the nation should go to war or not. They never would be called upon to shoulder arms -- to sleep in a trench and to be shot. Only those who would be called upon to risk their lives for their country should have the privilege of voting to determine whether the nation should go to war.

There is ample precedent for restricting the voting to those affected. Many of our states have restrictions on those permitted to vote. In most, it is necessary to be able to read and write before you may vote. In some, you must own property. It would be a simple matter each year for the men coming of military age to register in their communities as they did in the draft during the World War and be examined physically. Those who could pass and who would therefore be called upon to bear arms in the event of war would be eligible to vote in a limited plebiscite. They should be the ones to have the power to decide -- and not a Congress few of whose members are within the age limit and fewer still of whom are in physical condition to bear arms. Only those who must suffer should have the right to vote.

A third step in this business of smashing the war racket is to make certain that our military forces are truly forces for defense only.

At each session of Congress the question of further naval appropriations comes up. The swivel-chair admirals of Washington (and there are always a lot of them) are very adroit lobbyists. And they are smart. They don't shout that "We need a lot of battleships to war on this nation or that nation." Oh no. First of all, they let it be known that America is menaced by a great naval power. Almost any day, these admirals will tell you, the great fleet of this supposed enemy will strike suddenly and annihilate 125,000,000 people. Just like that. Then they begin to cry for a larger navy. For what? To fight the enemy? Oh my, no. Oh, no. For defense purposes only.

Then, incidentally, they announce maneuvers in the Pacific. For defense. Uh, huh.

The Pacific is a great big ocean. We have a tremendous coastline on the Pacific. Will the maneuvers be off the coast, two or three hundred miles? Oh, no. The maneuvers will be two thousand, yes, perhaps even thirty-five hundred miles, off the coast.

The Japanese, a proud people, of course will be pleased beyond expression to see the united States fleet so close to Nippon's shores. Even as pleased as would be the residents of California were they to dimly discern through the morning mist, the Japanese fleet playing at war games off Los Angeles.

The ships of our navy, it can be seen, should be specifically limited, by law, to within 200 miles of our coastline. Had that been the law in 1898 the Maine would never have gone to Havana Harbor. She never would have been blown up. There would have been no war with Spain with its attendant loss of life. Two hundred miles is ample, in the opinion of experts, for defense purposes. Our nation cannot start an offensive war if its ships can't go further than 200 miles from the coastline. Planes might be permitted to go as far as 500 miles from the coast for purposes of reconnaissance. And the army should never leave the territorial limits of our nation.

To summarize: Three steps must be taken to smash the war racket.

We must take the profit out of war.

We must permit the youth of the land who would bear arms to decide whether or not there should be war.

We must limit our military forces to home defense purposes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **To Hell With War!**

I am not a fool as to believe that war is a thing of the past. I know the people do not want war, but there is no use in saying we cannot be pushed into another war.

Looking back, Woodrow Wilson was re-elected president in 1916 on a platform that he had "kept us out of war" and on the implied promise that he would "keep us out of war." Yet, five months later he asked Congress to declare war on Germany.

In that five-month interval the people had not been asked whether they had changed their minds. The 4,000,000 young men who put on uniforms and marched or sailed away were not asked whether they wanted to go forth to suffer and die.

Then what caused our government to change its mind so suddenly?

Money.

An allied commission, it may be recalled, came over shortly before the war declaration and called on the President. The President summoned a group of advisers. The head of the commission spoke. Stripped of its diplomatic language, this is what he told the President and his group:

"There is no use kidding ourselves any longer. The cause of the allies is lost. We now owe you (American

bankers, American munitions makers, American manufacturers, American speculators, American exporters) five or six billion dollars.

If we lose (and without the help of the United States we must lose) we, England, France and Italy, cannot pay back this money . . . and Germany won't.

So . . . “

Had secrecy been outlawed as far as war negotiations were concerned, and had the press been invited to be present at that conference, or had radio been available to broadcast the proceedings, America never would have entered the World War. But this conference, like all war discussions, was shrouded in utmost secrecy. When our boys were sent off to war they were told it was a “war to make the world safe for democracy” and a “war to end all wars.”

Well, eighteen years after, the world has less of democracy than it had then. Besides, what business is it of ours whether Russia or Germany or England or France or Italy or Austria live under democracies or monarchies? Whether they are Fascists or Communists? Our problem is to preserve our own democracy.

And very little, if anything, has been accomplished to assure us that the World War was really the war to end all wars.

Yes, we have had disarmament conferences and limitations of arms conferences. They don't mean a thing. One has just failed; the results of another have been nullified. We send our professional soldiers and our sailors and our politicians and our diplomats to these conferences. And what happens?

The professional soldiers and sailors don't want to disarm. No admiral wants to be without a ship. No general wants to be without a command. Both mean men without jobs. They are not for disarmament. They cannot be for limitations of arms. And at all these conferences, lurking in the background but all-powerful, just the same, are the sinister agents of those who profit by war. They see to it that these conferences do not disarm or seriously limit armaments.

The chief aim of any power at any of these conferences has not been to achieve disarmament to prevent war but rather to get more armament for itself and less for any potential foe.

There is only one way to disarm with any semblance of practicability. That is for all nations to get together and scrap every ship, every gun, every rifle, every tank, every war plane. Even this, if it were possible, would not be enough.

The next war, according to experts, will be fought not with battleships, not by artillery, not with rifles and not with machine guns. It will be fought with deadly chemicals and gases.

Secretly each nation is studying and perfecting newer and ghastlier means of annihilating its foes wholesale. Yes, ships will continue to be built, for the shipbuilders must make their profits. And guns still will be manufactured and powder and rifles will be made, for the munitions makers must make their huge profits.

And the soldiers, of course, must wear uniforms, for the manufacturer must make their war profits too.

But victory or defeat will be determined by the skill and ingenuity of our scientists.

If we put them to work making poison gas and more and more fiendish mechanical and explosive instruments of destruction, they will have no time for the constructive job of building greater prosperity for all peoples. By putting them to this useful job, we can all make more money out of peace than we can out of war -- even the munitions makers.

So...I say,

# TO HELL WITH WAR!

# 31. FROM AGENT APPLE 007 TO TURKEYGATE

@Dec 5, 2003

After viewing the <http://www.apple.com/retail/jp/ginza/gallery1.html> " pictures of the Apple opening in Japan, I couldn't help but think that Steve Jobs has become James Bond. The place looks like it should be the set of a movie, not reality. And Apple, of course, is always making the greatest stuff in their laboratories. Some of them even explode during the experimentation stage, just like on the "real" James Bond movie set. Pixar, of course, is already in the land of movies and make-believe.

The analogy to 007 breaks down however, because, in the movie, the Apple Store set would usually be the evil lair of the mastermind bent on world domination. Apple couldn't be both Chaos and Control, could it? Maybe that building is from Get Smart, not James Bond. Hmm. Maybe could there are two sides to Apple. The eccentric genius and the controlling freak? No, that would be unlikely and unprecedented. Nobody rises to the top and.....

Sorry, I was interrupted by a news report. Well, news as best you can get these days. It is a story on MSNBC.com on Turkeygate. You know what Turkeygate is don't you? Turkeygate is the latest in a long line of clever advertising tricks used to dupe people. It is a national pastime, and used by both political parties in their attempt to fool all of the people all of the time. <http://www.msnbc.com/news/1001227.asp?0cv=KA01> You can read about it by clicking here.

Before you get complacent and think I am bashing Steve Jobs or George Bush, I am not. I am not bashing Abe Lincoln or John Kennedy either. (I don't bash, I merely describe :-)

Do we know which type of leader is best? Is it controlling freak and eccentric genius, or is it eccentric freak and controlling genius? Or a controlling eccentric freak or an eccentric genius freak?

You may define me however you wish. We should also be sure to define our leaders as they are, and not as their advertising wishes us to see them.

I hate advertising. Advertising is lies. Communicating and advertising are not the same thing.

## 32. SHATTER MY ASSUMPTIONS

If only I could get my mind to explode,  
Then I could be free of my humanity, and its stupidity.

Spontaneous combustion, instantaneous conflagration, call it what you will,  
I wish to break free of gravity, and be free like a bird.

I want to know a tree from the inside, and know a stream by its taste.  
I want to understand time by the season, and hour by light.

I want to shatter my assumptions, as well as my doubts,  
I want to be free of all things, and be bound just to life.

I want to know what it is like to chase the wind,  
to have nowhere to go and be always en route.

To arrive and to depart is one and the same,  
and to travel as a flock, a pair, or not.

The peace in sound is the rhythm in voice,  
whatever place I listen is part of the score.

Cold and wet, dark and light, warm and dry, it is all the same.  
Life and death, love and hate, more or less, it is all the same.

To rejoice in the heartbeat of my brief time.

If only I could get my mind to explode, and shatter all my assumptions.  
Then, perhaps, I could be free.

To rejoice in the heartbeat of my brief time.

## 33. AMERICAN FIREWORKS IN AFGANISTAN

@Dec 7, 2003

A BBC Report <A HREF="http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\_asia/3297575.stm">Click Here</A>

Acting on “extensive intelligence” the US military dropped an ariel bomb on a house in Afganistan killing nine children. The pinpoint accuracy did manage to kill one alleged bad guy too.

At a ratio of 9:1, we Americans just have to be willing to make these sacrifices for the good of democracy. Let me see..what was my sacrifice again? Oh yes, I have to keep my mouth shut, my eyes closed, my ears covered, and my attention elsewhere. Otherwise, the “extensive intelligence” of the al Qaeda network will defeat us.

I sure do hope that their Muslim parents wil forgive us, and turn the other cheek. Afterall, we wouldn't want them to hold us responsible for the sacrifices we made to kill them.

Since I am on the subject of war. The President sent James Baker to Iraq to work out the details of how Iraq is going to repay its debt to the U.S. Gee, isn't that what we did to Germany after WWI? We forced them to pay for their liberation, fertilized the ground with resentment, and then were shocked that extremist views took root.

It is too bad that all our “extensive intelligence” can't see the forest from the tree. We need a worldwide Jubilee.

**This is the News Report referenced in “American Fireworks in Afganistan.”**

US bombing kills Afghan children

US forces have admitted mistakenly killing nine children when they bombed a target in southern Afghanistan.

US military spokesman Major Christopher West said they had acted on information that a suspected terrorist was at a house near the city of Ghazni.

Ground forces later found the body of the intended target along with those of the children nearby, he said.

Major West said the US military regretted the loss of innocent life and would seek to explain the incident.

He said the suspect was thought to be behind the murders of two foreign contractors working on a ring road.

Acting on “extensive intelligence”, he said, an A10 “Warthog” - a heavily armoured plane - was called in and opened fire on the isolated rural site at about 1030 local time (0600 GMT) on Saturday.

The attack was precisely targeted - it hit one house without damaging others in the area.

The US military followed “stringent rules of engagement” to avoid such incidents, Major West added.

A commission had been formed to investigate the scene of the incident, he said.

### Frustration

Afghan Government sources said they believed the incident was a mistake.

The BBC’s Crispin Thorold in Afghanistan says the attack was very targeted, but that intelligence was not as good as it should have been.

He says local people - who are already sceptical of the US presence in the region - feel considerable resentment and anger in the wake of the attack.

It took place in a town where there is strong support for the ousted hardline Islamic Taleban and the Hezb-e-Islami group, also fighting the coalition.

Saturday’s bombing is the latest in a series of attacks by US-led forces which have resulted in the deaths of dozens of Afghan civilians since the start of the campaign against the Taleban and al-Qaeda in October 2001.

Afghan officials said in September eight nomads were among 10 people killed when US forces bombed targets in a massive offensive against suspected militants.

The US military is investigating that attack after initially denying any civilians were killed.

#### Accusations

In July last year, American forces killed at least 48 civilians when a stray bomb hit a civilian area in the southern province of Uruzgan.

Twenty-five of the dead were from a single family attending a wedding.

Although in many areas Afghans welcome the presence of American troops and other foreigners, there is hostility in some southern and eastern parts, our correspondent says.

## 34. SEARCHING FOR AN AUDIENCE

Besides this blog, I also have a blog at [www.BeHappyAndFree.com](http://www.BeHappyAndFree.com). This was a blog I created to place my first piece about Apple, which caught the attention of Roger, which led to my knowing about Tim, which led to my having a column here. Everything I write here is there, and vice-versa, although obviously with some difference in structure and intent. I don't really blog there like I am doing here however, so my world is becoming divided. Oh well.

BeHappyAndFree comes from the words of The Alan Parsons Project song "Day After Day (The Show Must Go On)" on the album, I Robot. The other day I dug out the album jacket, and this is what I discovered:

"I Robot: The story of the rise of the machine and the decline of man, which paradoxically coincided with his discovery of the wheel...and a warning that his brief dominance of this planet will probably end, because man tried to create a machine in his own image."

Those words were copyright 1976. Pretty amazing, huh? At the dawn of Apple. In my bio, I describe myself as a daydreamer. The words from the song read:

*Gaze at the sky  
And picture a memory  
Of days in your life  
You knew what it meant to **be happy and free**  
With time on your side*

*Remember your daddy  
When no one was wiser  
Your ma used to say  
That you would go further than he ever could  
With time on your side*

*Think of a boy with the stars in his eye  
Longing to reach them but frightened to try  
Sadly, you'd say, someday, someday*

*But day after day  
The show must go on  
And time slipped away  
Before you could build any castles in Spain  
The chance had gone by*

*With nothing to say  
And no one to say it to*

*Nothing has changed  
You've still got it all to do  
Surely you know  
The chance has gone by*

*Think of a boy with the stars in his eye  
Longing to reach them but frightened to try  
Sadly, you'd say, someday, someday*

*But, day after day  
The show must go on  
And you gaze at the sky  
And picture a memory of days in your life  
With time on your side*

*With time on your side  
(Day after day the show must go on)  
With time on your side  
(Day after day the show must go on)*

I copied the album to a digital format about a year ago, but never loaded the CD in my library. The other day at work I discovered a cassette of the LP, and have been playing it a lot there when I had the chance.

A few days later (before the snow) I took my daughter to the park. As I watched her roll down the hill, I realized why we all know what it is like to be happy and free with time on our side. It is the state of innocence, and trust, and inner peace. As adults, we understand that time is a compromise, and our emotions are mixed with a selfishness that is conscious and wilful. We lose our purity as we get older, but we never forget our innocent state. Like the Apple in the Garden of Eden, knowledge is the devil in us all.

When I started writing, I discovered that it made me need to constantly search for an audience. Although opinionated, I am more of a shy, stick to my cave kind of guy. Well, you know what they say about the quiet ones. I sure do talk a lot for a "quiet one."

I went to [www.alanparsons.com](http://www.alanparsons.com) the other day to see what he was up to. I never knew he was part of the genius behind Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. But what I really found was that even though I consider him a guy who has "made it," he too still seeks an audience.

John Farr, whose writings I love, is in the same boat. I am thrilled that he is here. We are all seeking a broader audience, and we all have a unique perspective to share. It is our humanity that makes us real. The I

Robot will never replace man.

What makes a man both superior to and weaker than the robot is his pride. Pride is a damn trap. Without the conceit to write, I have nothing to say. But with conceit, there is nothing worth saying.

As citizens of this new world of robots, I think we would do well to remember the words of a song from before automation:

### **Home on the Range**

*Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam  
Where the deer and the antelope play  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day*

Today, man has conquered nature. This is a recent event. Now man needs to conquer himself. The thing that will make it possible is the conscious choice to “seldom hear a discouraging word.” Hope is at the center of our humanity. It is what drives an artist to find an audience. It is what drives a reader to listen. It is what drives man in a system of the perpetual re-birth of the same wisdom.

John, in one of his stories, mentions a bumper sticker that says “Art Ain’t For Sissies”. It is correct, but still reveals the conceit of the artist. Actually, a more accurate expression would be “Life Ain’t For Sissies.” Have the courage to love your brother, and worry less about the robots. A child is easily frightened, and is afraid to reach for the sky. What makes a man a man is his courage without conceit.

## 35. STEVE JOBS IS RIGHT, STEVE JOBS IS WRONG

There is a great interview with Steve Jobs at Rolling Stone

[here](http://www.rollingstone.com/features/featuregen.asp?pid=2529) about the music industry. (This reference is no longer valid.)

Steve recognizes the problem. It is the issue of capital and credit required to get a new artist off the ground. And he is right, the winners pay for the losers. What he doesn't realize is that the system of winners is what is creating the losers. As a billionaire, he doesn't see the system as the problem per se. He accepts the fact of competition in the marketplace as a necessary prerequisite, in spite of the fact that his success with iTunes is a result of cooperation in the marketplace.

The problems we face today all revolve around the issue of capital and credit.

**David Bowie predicted that, because of the Internet and piracy, copyright is going to be dead in ten years. Do you agree?**

*No. If copyright dies, if patents die, if the protection of intellectual property is eroded, then people will stop investing. That hurts everyone. People need to have the incentive so that if they invest and succeed, they can make a fair profit. But on another level entirely, it's just wrong to steal. Or let's put it this way: It is corrosive to one's character to steal. We want to provide a legal alternative.*

This is the blindspot. What he is really saying is that it is corrosive to one's character to share. This was the mistake that started 200 plus years ago when we set up the copyright and patent systems. This was the same error in thinking that led the financier of the American Revolution (Robert Morris) to end up in debtors prison.

I will have lots more to say on the issue of capital and credit, but for now, I just wanted to make you aware of the interview.

## 36. THE AGE OF BLINDNESS

The purpose of the Age of Reason was to end the privileged debauchery of the religious and political elite. We have, in its place, created a new Age of Blindness, Where we once had darkness, and then a path of light, we now find ourselves blinded by the light. Our eyes may be open, but we cannot see anything.

Religious lies and dogma still separate man with vicious opinions of the unknown, but the scientific method has now added a new element of moral certainty. With science, we now claim to know the unknown mathematically, and believe it to be true just as fervently. Where before someone would open the Good Book, and claim to understand every mystery, today we open a book of numbers, and claim equally to have understand every mystery. We trust these numbers on a piece of paper more than our own two eyes.

Nothing represents this blinding light better than nuclear power. Our “reason” did not slow the old-age impulse to build bigger and stronger weapons. We are now caught in a cat-and-mouse game with terrorists, hoping to prevent being victims of a weapon we created, A dirty bomb, the intentional bombings in Japan, power plant accidents, and our bomb testings all share a common feature: The release of poison into our environment in concentrations that are not safe. Commonsense is no longer a part of the Age of Reason.

Our lexicon refers to “a jobless recovery,” as if an economy that does not provide sustenance to people somehow has value. “The numbers look good, we are turning the corner.” The machines are fed, but the people go hungry. I had a good year, I like the numbers written on my bank statement better than the numbers written on it last year. We can no longer separate our happiness or our actions from the numbers written on a piece of paper. Numbers define our past, present, and comfort with the future.

En masse we fill out forms for April 15. It is our duty as citizens to complete tax forms. It is for the greater good, and somewhere in the bowel of bureaucracy someone will read and audit our work. The massive collective effort of looking at numbers on paper has no known limit. With each passing generation we have more people employed looking at numbers. Not thinking, not writing, not analyzing, barely contributing. All for the purpose of filling a giant-sized file cabinet with sequential nothingness.

But this grand collection of numbers on paper would not be complete without making it a crime too. We collect the numbers, and then make sure no one alters the numbers to their “advantage.” Now we have people who watch the people who watch the numbers. If only a number itself were real, then we would all be wealthy beyond our wildest dreams.

How is it possible to have so much wealth, so much production, and so much misery side-by-side? Most revolutionaries are quick to blame the elite of privileged debauchery. I do not. We have tried theocracy, we have tried monarchy, we have tried capitalism and communism. In each case we ended up with an elite of privileged debauchery. It is time to recognize that we are blinded by numbers, and have been for hundreds of years.

“No taxation without representation!” Which is it that we desire? Numbers or Liberty? We revolted against a system of taxation, and created one even worse. World trade agreements, banking, financing, tariffs and

protections all justified by numbers on paper. We sought a solution to life's mystery and misery through science and reason, and have solved neither. Our light now shines too brightly, and we are making the whole world blind.

## 37. BAH HUMBUG!

I asked my seven year-old daughter a question yesterday. I said, “When Christ was born, three men gave gifts to a strange baby. Isn’t that how we should celebrate? Rather than getting gifts for Christmas, maybe we should give a present to a baby whenever one is born. That way, anyday can be Christmas. You would only get presents the year you were born. But, we can only give the present to somebody we don’t know. What do you think?”

She liked the idea. My 10-year old didn’t like it as much. And my oldest one said “Dad, you can’t change Christmas.”

*Matthew 11:25*

*At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”*

## 38. MORE DEAD AFGHAN CHILDREN

<A HREF="http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\_asia/3305837.stm">BBC Link</A>

President God Bush has sacrificed more than ten, and we with him, and us with them.

*However, the US has warned it will not be deterred by civilian casualties.....*

*The US spokesman said there had been no indication that civilians were at the scene and he suggested the victims were partly to blame.....*

Yes, it was all the children's fault. Why take responsibility for one's own mistakes when one can blame a dead child instead.

(He was just following our orders.)

### Genesis 18

#### *Abraham Pleads for Sodom*

*16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. 17 Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? 18 Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."*

*20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."*

*22 The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. [5] 23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare [6] the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge [7] of all the earth do right?"*

*26 The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."*

*27 Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, 28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?"*

*"If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."*

*29 Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"  
He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it."*

*30 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"*

*He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."*

*31 Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"*

*He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it."*

*32 Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?"*

*He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it."*

*33 When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.*

## **This is the News Report referenced in “More Dead Afghan Children.”**

More Afghan children die in raids

The US military in Afghanistan has revealed that six children died in a raid on suspected militants in the eastern province of Paktia last week.

News of the deaths came shortly after the US apologised for killing nine children in a separate raid in the neighbouring province of Ghazni.

However, the US has warned it will not be deterred by civilian casualties.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has sent investigators to Ghazni amid concern the raids are alienating local people.

A US spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Bryan Hilferty, told reporters in Kabul on Wednesday that the bodies of six children were found under a collapsed wall at a compound 20 kilometres (12 miles) east of Gardez, in Paktia province.

Two adults' bodies were also found at the scene when ground forces searched the area on Saturday.

The US spokesman said there had been no indication that civilians were at the scene and he suggested the victims were partly to blame for being at a site used by militants to store munitions.

“If non-combatants surround themselves with thousands of weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition and howitzers and mortars, in a compound known to be used by a terrorist, we are not completely responsible for the consequences,” he said.

The raid was launched in the belief that a suspected militant, Mullah Jilani, was staying in the compound.

When troops arrived they did not find the suspect but made nine other arrests, a US spokesman said.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has defended the aggressive pursuit of militant leaders in Afghanistan, saying the Pentagon is equally happy to capture or kill them.

‘No guarantee’

The US military earlier admitted mistakenly killing nine children in an air attack on Saturday against another suspected militant in Ghazni Province.

“I can't guarantee that we will not injure more civilians,” said Lieutenant Colonel Hilferty, adding: “I wish I could”.

During the Ghazni raid, an A-10 ground attack aircraft opened fire at a figure thought to be that of a militant leader, Mullah Wazir.

The identity of the man killed along with the children has been disputed.

Villagers say he was a local labourer and that the intended target had left the area days before the attack.

General Richard Myers, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, was among senior US figures to offer condolences after Saturday's deaths.

"We haven't been perfect," he said.

'This is not helping'

Afghan officials have warned that "mistakes" such as the Ghazni deaths risk undermining the US-backed Afghan Government.

Hamid Karzai said on Wednesday he had sent his own investigators to Ghazni but the president, a key US ally, was careful not to apportion blame.

"We are trying to find... the best possible manner to prevent incidents like that," he said.

"We are thinking if aerial activity is helpful or if it causes suffering."

Nazir Saberi, a minister in the Afghan Government, told the BBC's Newshour programme that he was "angry at the people who are not being very, very careful about these things".

He said that coalition forces had to "learn to coordinate with the Afghan authorities".

"This is not helping really the government... and people will be angry and everybody is embarrassed like myself," he added.

"It is terrible, the tragedy of children being killed."

#### BOMBING ERRORS\*

Dec 2001: 65 killed in bombing of convoy of tribal elders

April 2002: Four Canadian soldiers killed

July 2002: 48 killed when bomb hits wedding party

April 2003: 11 killed by bomb in village of Shkin

Dec 2003: Nine children killed by bombing in Ghazni Province; six children killed in raid in Paktia province

\*Mistakes accepted by US

## 39. APPLE: EXCLUSIVE PROVIDER OF

I just got an e-mail from a supplier stating that they were the exclusive supplier of fleece jackets made by Columbia Sportswear. Never mind that I don't believe them. What they are probably saying is that they are the exclusive supplier in the decorator industry. Chances are you can find the same thing retail. And, if it is a private label item, thus really making it exclusive, there still isn't anything unique about a fleece jacket. "Exclusive," in this case, means a "monopoly" in the marketplace.

Economic theory states that monopolies are bad, and laws make them illegal. The practice of monopoly, however, is highly desirable. It is touted in marketing, practice and desire. What it sells is pride. My supplier is trying to tell me that their product is unique. When people want "what's new," this will be the thing to give them. And, it will be to my competitive advantage.

Pride is another word for cool. Is Apple cool because its stuff is cool or because it works better? Apple is the exclusive provider of the iPod. Does the price reflect the component costs or the cool monopoly? Cool people should have money. People aren't usually considered cool if they are poor. When people are poor and talented we usually describe them as "dedicated", or some other innocuous word. Being cool is mostly for rich people. If you can get the people with money to "buy with pride", well golly, you got yourself a sale. You (the seller) declare your pride in yourself, and they (the buyer) declare their pride in themselves.

Am I cool because I use Apple stuff, and it costs a little more? Or, am I cool because of what I do with it? Probably a little of both. Part of me wants to be dedicated, but to be wealthy would be cool. Then I could buy all the cool things I want.

What is clear, is that advertisers do try to sell you pride. Humility and advertising is like oil and water. It seldom mixes. The advertising that says we're #2 and try harder is a rarity, and even then, proudly points out being #2. The whole idea of competition and defining yourself as compared to others is prideful. Microsoft vs Apple is both a marketplace battle between monopolies and a personal one of pride.

When the Apple community looks at Microsoft, we let out a collective yawn. We have more pride than they do in quality. They likewise look at the Apple community and yawn, because they have marketplace dominance. Pride is one of those things that can blind you.

The iPod and iTunes now bridges the gap between the two communities. Everybody's pride will have to be redefined. Apple will be touting marketshare growth and Microsoft will tout new quality improvements. The roles may someday reverse, but not the pride. The cost of that pride is built into whatever product you buy.

## 40. STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES

At New York City's Rockefeller Center, Spanish-speaking employees were prohibited from speaking Spanish. This is not an isolated case among employers, and the idea has taken hold in many school systems too.

In France, it has been recommended that any type of religious adornment be prohibited from schools. (Headscarfs, crosses, and yarmulkas) [here](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3309885.stm)

In Italy, artificial insemination has been outlawed except for heterosexual couples who can prove they are in a "stable relationship." [here](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3311031.stm)

Taken together, we have a new view of the Rights of Man: He must shut up, and the State controls what he wears and regulates his sex life and procreation. If this is how the free citizens of society are treated, what exactly is the difference between being free and being a prisoner? The only thing missing is a law telling one when he can eat.

Thomas Paine must be rolling over in his grave.

## **These are the News Report referenced in “Stupid is as Stupid Does.”**

### 1.) French clerics oppose scarf ban

Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders in France have condemned a proposed ban on conspicuous religious signs such as headscarves or crucifixes in schools.

Jewish leader Moise Cohen said such a ban would be seen as discriminatory and could “exacerbate emotions”.

Kamal Kabtane, head of the Grand Mosque of Lyon, told Reuters news agency that the proposal would resolve “nothing.”

The proposal follows an expert commission report on issues relating to religion and the state in France.

Christian groups have said the proposed ban could harm the integration of schools.

‘Respect of differences’

French President Jacques Chirac is to announce next week whether he supports the commission’s recommendation.

The ban would also include the Jewish skull-cap and large Christian crosses.

Former minister Bernard Stasi, who headed the commission consulted a wide cross-section of public opinion, including teachers, religious leaders, sociologists and politicians before handing in the report to the president on Thursday.

Although the report was into the wider question of French secularism, debate on the issue has focused on the wearing of Islamic headscarves in schools.

The commission’s recommendations would outlaw the Jewish kippa, large Christian crosses and the Islamic headscarf, which would be considered overt religious symbols.

“Discreet” medallions and pendants which merely confirm a person’s religious faith would be allowed.

“Muslims must understand that secularism is a chance for Islam,” Mr Stasi told a news conference on Thursday.

“Secularism is the separation of church and state, but it is also the respect of differences.”

The commission’s proposed law was intended so people of all religions could “live together in public places”, he said.

Mr Stasi stressed that the commission’s work did not target France’s Muslim community but was aimed at giving all religions a more equal footing.

## Public holidays

The report also recommends that Yom Kippur - the Jewish Day of Atonement - and the Muslim Eid al-Kabir festival be celebrated in state schools.

French public life has a strong secular tradition which has existed since the revolution, but the commission has now recommended that the plan be enshrined in law.

Mr Chirac has hinted that he could back a formal ban.

He said he would study the proposals, consider the opinions of “political parties, the religious authorities and the representatives of public opinion” and discuss them with the prime minister before announcing his decision.

“The objective is to guarantee freedom to every French citizen, with the only restriction that the common rules be respected,” he said.

The issue has led to a number of celebrated cases where girls have been suspended or expelled for wearing headscarves to school.

Other schools have not acted.

France has the largest Muslim population in the European Union, with around five million people.

## 2.) Italy bans donor sperm and eggs

Italy's Senate has overwhelmingly approved a law which bans the use of donor sperm, eggs or surrogate mothers.

It also limits the right to artificial fertilisation to "heterosexual couples in stable relationships", excluding gay couples and single women.

The bill, one of the most restrictive in Europe, has drawn support and criticism from across the party lines.

BBC Rome correspondent Frances Kennedy says that the bill has pitted Catholics against liberals and men against women.

The legislation, passed in the Senate by 169 votes to 90 on Thursday, will now be sent back to the lower house of the parliament for minor adjustments.

Officials say it will remain essentially unchanged.

Under the law, only infertile couples can apply for artificial insemination, and only to government-approved centres.

They have to prove that they are married or in a stable relationship.

Doctors can create up to three embryos for each attempt, and these cannot be frozen or used for research.

Indeed, the freezing of any embryo or sperm is outlawed, as is screening for abnormalities, even in couples who suffer from genetic disorders.

Women are also not allowed to use the sperm of a deceased partner.

### Bitter splits

Senator Elisabetta Alberti Casellati, from the governing Forza Italia party, argued that the rights of the embryo will now be protected.

"This law says 'enough' to the abuses. It recognises that an embryo is a person and as such must be protected from the point of conception," she said.

The bill's opponents say the Senate has bowed to pressure from the Roman Catholic Church and created one of the most backward laws in Europe.

Critics have called it medieval and say it could lead to a ban on abortion.

Deputy Foreign Minister Margherita Boniver - also of Forza Italia - said the law had aspects which resembled a horror film.

There were, however, calls for the Italian legislators to go even further and outlaw abortion altogether.

Seven-time Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, now a senator for life, pointed out that the law recognises an embryo's legal rights.

"I don't understand, therefore, why it can be killed for up to four months," he said.

## 41. A NEW PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

The controversy about the Pledge of Allegiance involves the words “under God,” but the controversy should be about the words “to the flag.” Why do we make a pledge to a flag, and not to each other? How can we claim to be a Christian or a moral nation when we make pledges to false icons?

The original pledge is in the last paragraph of The Declaration of Independence, and there is no controversy in recognizing the existence of a Supreme Judge or God. This divisive issue is easily solved by using the words of our founding document. These are the words we should remember and hold close to our hearts. The first quote is the original, the second is an abbreviated version that I suggest we use:

ORIGINAL: We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor. </I>

SUGGESTED: We, the Representatives of the United States of America, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor. </I>

“We the People” would be better served by a pledge that recognizes that our duty is to one another, and starts with the word “we” rather than “I”. “The Republic, for which it stands” represents our unity only by proxy. There is no more important role than that of citizen. Rather than feating our accomplishments, the pledge should be to uphold our responsibility.

## 42. AMERICA DID NOT CAPTURE SADDAM HUSSEIN

Saddam Hussein is now under the control of the American armed forces, and the President and our allies will proudly proclaim “mission accomplished,” “we got him!”

Nothing could be further than the truth.

Today, after thousands of Iraqi deaths, enough Iraqis in the right place overcame their fear and stood up to challenge Saddam Hussein. They were not the first, only the first ones who were successful.

America has been waging a campaign with the cloak of Liberty, but has more often than not been using money as a bribe to entice compliance with our goals.

The message for the world, our allies and foes alike, is that the ends justify the means. Regrettably, this is the same moral position of the terrorists. The Iraqis, as a result of overcoming their fears, may now find the path to a free society. I hope so for them, but we should not wrap our choice in moral pride. The ends do not justify the means.

Had Saddam been a gentleman tyrant, he would still be in power. We would have done little to advance the cause of Liberty and the self-governance of the Iraqi people had he not invaded Kuwait. Our history is clear on that point, and the President’s recent message to Taiwan to not seek independence proves the point yet again.

Our corporations will move in, make huge investments of capital, all for the purpose of getting a financial return. With or without the overcharging for specific contracts, this war of liberation is ultimately about protecting “business as usual.” The invasion of Kuwait disrupted business. Our desire to reward contracts to only those who bend to our will is how we continually prostitute the concept of Liberty.

Osama bin Laden states in his Letter to America that the only language America understands is violence. While we are certainly not the only ones who speak this language, we should at least be honest with ourselves.

This was never a war for peace, it was a war for victory. We will not find peace until we recognize how shocking and awful our motives are. We will spend ungodly sums to kill people, to make the world safe for corporations.

The Iraqi people have overcome their fear. I hope one day America can do the same.

## 43. THE FEDERAL RESERVE AND THE ROTH IRA

There is a good quick history of Banking in America and the Federal Reserve [Here](http://www.kc.frb.org/fed101html/History/timeline.htm).

What is interesting about this timeline is that it is easy to see that America has been struggling with our banking system since our very inception. Every few years, and at most twenty, we dramatically alter our banking laws to deal with a crisis. In fact, crisis is the most consistent characteristic of our banking history.

The other fixed characteristic is speculation and the lending of money for interest. A recent trend in society is the investing of savings to protect oneself from inflation. The government funds pensions with an interest return, and insurance companies presume an interest return when plotting their rates. Adjustments to the rates of return, and especially a downturn in the market, ripple through the entire economy. It is a wave of misery that everyone is unable to stop. People lose their businesses, their jobs and put off retirement. Public funding for schools, roads, and social services always end up getting cut back at a time when they are needed most.

To get an idea of how distorted the banking laws are, take for example the Roth IRA. The Roth IRA was a way to make gains from investments tax free. Essentially, by filling out a form, you are exempted from contributing to the Federal Treasury. But that is not the worst of it.

If you lose money with your Roth IRA, you can also make an adjustment for the loss. Basically, what this means is that if you lose money, the Feds cover part of your bet. And, if you make money, you have no obligation. This is pretty much a double screwing for those who have no surplus wealth. While this is probably touted as a savings for the middle class, in reality it makes everyone subject to even more wild swings in our economic life.

To get more information about the Roth IRA visit this [site](http://www.rothira.com/).

Here is an example of what you will find there:

**<i><b>**

*“Can you help me? I converted my IRA to a Roth in 1998 when it was worth \$100,000. I elected to pay the tax over four years, so I’ve paid tax on \$50,000 and I still have to report \$25,000 a year on my 2000 and 2001 tax returns. The problem is that the Roth is now only worth \$20,000. Can I undo the conversion?”*

*</b></i>*

This question, or a variation of it, has become very commonplace due to the current stock market. While the simple answer is that the law states that it is too late to recharacterize a 1998 (or 1999) Roth conversion, it is possible that the IRS will still permit a late recharacterization based upon these circumstances. The request to the IRS has to be in the form of a formal ruling request and while there is no guarantee that the IRS will issue a favorable ruling, it could be worth the expense of trying. Alternatively, there may be a way to at least partially salvage the situation. Whether it pays to do so will have to be

evaluated on a case-by-case basis, since everyone's numbers are different. </i>

What I want to point out is that the guy lost \$80,000.00 and he is worried about not paying more taxes. He is living in a world of make-believe. It is common on the political left to blame corporations and the wealthy, what the left fails to realize is that they too are blind. The idea of "socially responsible" investing will never work because it follows the same pattern of speculation. The banking system is fundamentally flawed.

Recently there was a hurricane off the coast of Florida. As a result, a lot of people were dumping their insurance stocks. This is a micro-view of what is wrong with the system. At the point where the banking system should be providing strength, it instead provides weakness. The stock price plummets, and the insurance company is weakened before the storm even hits land. It is the ultimate system of pass the buck and we are all trapped in it, rich and poor alike.

**This was taken directly from the Federal Reserve's website.**

## 1775-1791: U.S. Currency in the Beginning

To finance the American Revolution, the Continental Congress printed the new nation's first paper money. Known as "continentals," the fiat currency notes were issued in such quantity they led to inflation, which, though mild at first, rapidly accelerated as the war progressed. Eventually, people lost faith in the notes, and the phrase "Not worth a continental" came to mean "utterly worthless."

## 1791-1811: First Attempt at Central Banking

At the urging of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, Congress established the First Bank of the United States, headquartered in Philadelphia, in 1791. It was the largest corporation in the country and was dominated by big banking and money interests. Many agrarian minded Americans, uncomfortable with the idea of a large and powerful central bank, opposed it. By 1811 when the bank's 20-year charter expired, Congress refused, by one vote, to renew it.

## 1816-1836: A Second Try Fails

By 1816 the political climate was once again inclined toward the idea of a central bank; by a narrow margin, Congress agreed to charter the Second Bank of the United States. But when Andrew Jackson, a central bank foe, was elected president in 1828, he vowed to kill it. His attack on its banker-controlled power touched a popular nerve with Americans, and when the Second Bank's charter expired in 1836, it was not renewed.

## 1836-1865: The Free Banking Era

State-chartered banks and unchartered "free banks" took hold during this period, issuing their own notes, redeemable in gold or specie. Banks also began offering demand deposits to enhance commerce. In response to a rising volume of check transactions, the New York Clearinghouse Association was established in 1853 to provide a way for the city's banks to exchange checks and settle accounts.

## 1863: National Banking Act

During the Civil War the National Banking Act of 1863 was passed, providing for nationally chartered banks, whose circulating notes had to be backed by U.S. government securities. An amendment to the act required taxation on state bank notes but not national bank notes, effectively creating a uniform currency for the nation. Despite taxation on their notes, state banks continued to flourish due to the growing popularity of demand deposits, which had taken hold during the Free Banking Era.

## 1873-1907: Financial Panics Prevail

Although the National Banking Act of 1863 established some measure of currency stability for the growing nation, bank runs and financial panics continued to plague the economy. In 1893 a banking panic triggered the worst depression the United States had ever seen, and the economy stabilized only after the intervention

of financial mogul J.P. Morgan. It was clear that the nation's banking and financial system needed serious attention.

#### 1907: A Very Bad Year

In 1907 a bout of speculation on Wall Street ended in failure, triggering a particularly severe banking panic. J.P. Morgan was again called upon to avert disaster. By this time most Americans were calling for reform of the banking system, but the structure of that reform was cause for deep division among the country's citizens. Conservatives and powerful "money trusts" in the big Eastern cities were vehemently opposed by "progressives." But there was a growing consensus among all Americans that a central banking authority was needed to ensure a healthy banking system and provide for an elastic currency.

#### 1908-1912: The Stage is Set for Decentralized Central Bank

The Aldrich-Vreeland Act of 1908, passed as an immediate response to the panic of 1907, provided for emergency currency issues during crises. It also established the National Monetary Commission to search for a long-term solution to the nation's banking and financial problems. Under the leadership of Sen. Nelson Aldrich, the commission developed a banker-controlled plan. William Jennings Bryan and other progressives fiercely attacked the plan; they wanted a central bank under public, not banker, control. The 1912 election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson killed the Republican Aldrich plan, but the stage was set for the emergence of a decentralized central bank.

#### 1912: Woodrow Wilson as Financial Reformer

Though not personally knowledgeable about banking and financial issues, Woodrow Wilson solicited expert advice from Virginia Rep. Carter Glass, soon to become the chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Finance, and from the Committee's expert adviser, H. Parker Willis, formerly a professor of economics at Washington and Lee University. Throughout most of 1912 Glass and Willis labored over a central bank proposal, and by December 1912 they presented Wilson with what would become, with some modifications, the Federal Reserve Act.

#### 1913: The Federal Reserve System is Born

From December 1912 to December 1913 the Glass-Willis proposal was hotly debated, molded and reshaped. By December 23, 1913, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act into law, it stood as a classic example of compromise -- a decentralized central bank that balanced the competing interests of private banks and populist sentiment.

#### 1914: Open for Business

Before the new central bank could begin operations, the Reserve Bank Organizing Committee, comprised of Treasury Secretary William McAdoo, Secretary of Agriculture David Houston, and Comptroller of the Currency John Skelton Williams, had the arduous task of building a working institution around the bare bones of the new law. But by November 16, 1914, the 12 cities chosen as sites for regional Reserve Banks

were open for business, just as hostilities in Europe erupted into World War I.

#### 1914-1919: Fed Policy During the War

When World War I broke out in mid-1914, U.S. banks continued to operate normally, thanks to emergency currency issued under the Aldrich-Vreeland Act of 1908. But the greater impact in the United States came from the Reserve Banks' ability to discount banker's acceptances. Through this mechanism, the United States aided the flow of trade goods to Europe, indirectly helping to finance the war until 1917, when the United States officially declared war on Germany and financing our own war effort became paramount.

#### 1920s: The Beginning of Open Market Operations

Following World War I, Benjamin Strong, head of the New York Fed from 1914 to his death in 1928, recognized that gold no longer served as the central factor in controlling credit. Strong's aggressive action to stem a recession in 1923 through a large purchase of government securities gave strong evidence of the power of open market operations to influence the availability of credit in the banking system. During the 1920s the Fed began using open market operations as a monetary policy tool. During his tenure, Strong also elevated the stature of the Fed by promoting relations with other central banks, especially the Bank of England.

#### 1929-1933: The Market Crash and the Great Depression

During the 1920s, Virginia Rep. Carter Glass warned that stock market speculation would lead to dire consequences. In October 1929 his predictions seemed to be realized when the stock market crashed, and the nation fell into the worst depression in its history. From 1930 to 1933 nearly 10,000 banks failed, and by March 1933 newly inaugurated President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared a bank holiday, while government officials grappled with ways to remedy the nation's economic woes. Many people blamed the Fed for failing to stem speculative lending that led to the crash, and some also argued that inadequate understanding of monetary economics kept the Fed from pursuing policies that could have lessened the depth of the Depression.

#### 1933: The Depression's Aftermath

In reaction to the Great Depression, Congress passed the Banking Act of 1933, better known as the Glass-Steagall Act, calling for the separation of commercial and investment banking and requiring use of government securities as collateral for Federal Reserve notes. The Act also established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC), placed open market operations under the Fed and required bank holding companies to be examined by the Fed, a practice that was to have profound future implications, as holding companies became a prevalent structure for banks over time. Also, as part of the massive reforms taking place, Roosevelt recalled all gold and silver certificates, effectively ending the gold and any other metallic standard.

### 1935: More Changes to Come

The Banking Act of 1935 called for further changes in the Fed's structure, including the creation of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) as a separate legal entity, removal of the Treasury Secretary and the Comptroller of the Currency from the Fed's governing board and establishment of members' terms at 14 years. Following World War II, the Employment Act added the goal of promoting maximum employment to the list of the Fed's responsibilities. In 1956 the Bank Holding Company Act named the Fed as the regulator for bank holding companies owning more than one bank, and in 1978 the Humphrey-Hawkins Act required the Fed chairman to report to Congress twice annually on monetary policy goals and objectives.

### 1951: The Treasury Accord

The Fed largely supported the Treasury's fiscal policy goals from its founding in 1913 to the years up to and following World War II. When the Korean Conflict broke out in 1951, Fed chairman William McChesney Martin again faced pressure from the Treasury to maintain low interest rates to help provide funds for the new conflict. Martin, however, worked closely with the Treasury to break the long-standing practice of supporting government bond interest rates. Since then the Fed has remained staunchly independent in its use of open market operations to support its monetary policy goals.

### 1970s-1980s: Inflation and Disinflation

The 1970s saw inflation skyrocket as producer and consumer prices rose, oil prices soared and the federal deficit more than doubled. By August 1979, when Paul Volcker was sworn in as Fed chairman, drastic action was needed to break inflation's stranglehold on the U.S. economy. Volcker's leadership as Fed chairman during the 1980s, though painful in the short term, was successful overall in bringing double-digit inflation under control.

### 1980: Setting the Stage for Financial Modernization

The Monetary Control Act of 1980 required the Fed to price its financial services competitively against private sector providers and to establish reserve requirements for all eligible financial institutions. The act marks the beginning of a period of modern banking industry reforms. Following its passage, interstate banking proliferated, and banks began offering interest-paying accounts and instruments to attract customers from brokerage firms. Barriers to insurance activities, however, proved more difficult to circumvent. Nonetheless, momentum for change was steady, and by 1999 the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act was passed, in essence overturning the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 and allowing banks to offer a menu of financial services, including investment banking and insurance sales.

### 1990s: The Longest Economic Expansion

Two months after Alan Greenspan took office as Fed chairman, the stock market crashed on October 19, 1987. In response, he ordered the Fed to issue a one-sentence statement before the start of trading on October 20: "The Federal Reserve, consistent with its responsibilities as the nation's central bank, affirmed today its readiness to serve as a source of liquidity to support the economic and financial system." The

10-year economic expansion of the 1990s came to a close in March 2001 and was followed by a short, shallow recession ending in November 2001. In response to the bursting of the 1990s stock market bubble in the early years of the decade, the Fed lowered interest rates rapidly. Throughout the 1990s, the Fed used monetary policy on a number of occasions-including the credit crunch of the early 1990s and the Russian default on government bonds-to keep potential financial problems from adversely affecting the real economy. The decade was marked by generally declining inflation and the longest peacetime economic expansion in our country's history.

#### September 11, 2001

The effectiveness of the Federal Reserve as a central bank was put to the test on September 11, 2001 as the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania disrupted U.S. financial markets. The Fed issued a one-sentence statement reminiscent of its announcement in 1987. "The Federal Reserve System is open and operating. The discount window is available to meet liquidity needs." In the days that followed, the Fed lowered interest rates and loaned more than \$45 billion to financial institutions in order to provide stability to the U.S. economy. By the end of September, Fed lending had returned to pre-September 11 levels and a potential liquidity crunch had been averted. The Fed played the pivotal role in dampening the effects of the September 11 attacks on U.S. financial markets.

#### January 2003: Discount Window Operation Changes

In 2003 the Federal Reserve changed its discount window operations so as to have rates at the window above the prevailing Fed Funds rate and provide rationing of loans to banks through interest rates.

#### Challenges for the 21st Century

The Federal Reserve faces many new challenges in the financial services industry: deregulation, technological advances in the payments system, the move to a more global economy, and continuing mergers and acquisitions in the banking industry. In late 2003, the Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act, known as Check 21 in the industry, was enacted. The coming years will see the use of "substitute checks," paper reproductions of original checks that can be processed just like the originals.

## 44. WHAT ABOUT INTEGRITY?

Mark says torturing Saddam might save American lives, but what about innocent lives? Abraham argued with God to show mercy on the unjust to save just ten innocent lives. Are we to believe a soldier counts among the innocent? Was the dropping of the Atom Bomb not the same issue? We slaughter thousands of innocent lives so we can save a single soldier. What difference does it make? Are these men immortal? Did they not choose to live by the sword? Were they not going to die someday anyway? Of what point are Rules of War?

What is it that Saddam possesses that we must have today, when we couldn't have had anything yesterday? Had our bombing killed him, would the information not be lost then too? Torture is a barbaric way to compress time. It is a fool's urgency. God will deliver us from fear and have the final justice, not us. Our test, is to live with integrity, when no one is watching.

\*\*\*Mark is another writer at [www.mymac.com](http://www.mymac.com) As you can tell, we are having a public debate. I believe he is a teacher at a Catholic school. His casual attitude towards the practical use of torture reveals one of the biggest problems in the world.

## 45. REMEMBER WHEN THEY PULLED DOWN THE STATUES OF SADDAM?

When you think about it, isn't an amazing thing to build a statue of a leader who would wage war on his own people? How does one punish such a man? George Bush says the death penalty is warranted. It is amazing how pride can blind a man to his own true actions. He builds a false icon and adorns it with false virtues. The statue and the leader I am referring to is not Saddam Hussein, but Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln did everything that Saddam Hussein did. Not only do we have a Lincoln Memorial, George Bush practically sleeps in the man's bed. That would be a historical first. A death sentence given by one president against another, of the same country!

Am I unamerican for suggesting that we should tear down the Lincoln Monument? No, but that may not stop some from accusing me. I hope they don't torture me for my secret plans, since I don't have any. I think we should vote on it. Just kidding. That would be a waste of time. Let it stand there and deteriorate intentionally, like those Buddhist statues in Afganistan.

Voting on it would be like passing a Constitutional Admendment to protect the flag. Really dumb. You should see the crappy flags I see flying. We should hold a contest for the most disgraceful one in the country. We love false icons, but we hate taking care of them. We have trouble recognizing the difference between a symbol as a graphic image and what it is we claim to be. It is the same difference between how we claim to be moral and righteous, and then how we actually treat others.

## 46. INTELLECTUAL FOLLY

Mark suggests that comparing Saddam to Lincoln is intellectual folly. He is right of course. They are very different men. Lincoln would ponder the point, Saddam would kill me. It reminds me of the time I heard George F. Buckley, when discussing school lunch initiatives, ask, (or state) “Has anyone died of starvation in an American public school?” He was implying that we did not need to feed people until a full fledged famine was in effect. The hypocrisy of three square meals a day for some and not others was not something he could pierce. Nor, I fear, most conservative thinkers can do even today.

There is a news report that Saddam was not captured by American forces, but liberated! The report suggests that he was already being held prisoner. [Here](http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=743)

Mark says *”Peace is always the highest form of integrity, but as humans we continually come up short”* I agree. But there is a complacency with Americans that the shortfall is worse with others and less so with ourselves. We put Saddam in power, and people like him all around the world. We have destroyed democracies around the world, and when I offer a plausible reason as to why, Mark calls me asinine. (Meant nicely of course.)

The American Revolution was a break with complacency. The Civil War broke the complacency of slavery. We have today a complacency with the Marketplace. No matter what problem arises, we say this is the best that can be achieved. This is the exact attitude that the Revolution sought to overthrow: “Whatever is, is best.” A nation is great because of moral courage, and the willingness to shed its own blood for peace.

Complacency is an attitude well demonstrated by Pangloss in Voltaire’s *Candide*.

Your volly, Mr. Pangloss? :-)

## 47. THE REVOLUTION STARTED OVER A BEER

Mark suggests that my ideas “have not faced real world testing.” He is right to a certain degree. But I think a better way to look at it is that when the country was founded, the choices they made had not faced real world testing. We now have the benefit of experience, and need to make adjustments made on that experience.

Mark doesn't agree with me, but I can state with 100% surety that he does not understand me. He suggests that my idea requires “massive government intervention,” when nothing could be farther from the truth. My system will break the back of big government, big union and big corporations. As such, everyone, at first glance, is opposed to my ideas. (lucky me) It will make no one comfortable, including the churches. Even those who agree with me, whom I have talked to in depth, don't fully realize the nuance of my ideas. How could they? They haven't had my “real world” experience. What Mark suggests my ideas lack is exactly what they have and why they will work.

This, of course, forces me to use my experience to justify my ideas. While people do seem to respond best to such methods of inquiry, they are the ones I feel most uncomfortable writing about. A long time ago Roger said that writers have to write about themselves, since that was the topic they know best. While I dislike the idea, what Roger said was, in fact, true. I guess if I am to expect others to agree that ideas are true that they don't like, then I must do the same. Here then, is a brief synopsis of my “real world” experience.

I started a business 17 years ago with a \$5000 investment. During that time I have always been a very small business with a limited number of employees, payroll, etc. If I go bankrupt tomorrow, it won't be because I don't know how to run a business, but because I simply cannot control my boredom with it. I know what the tax laws are, and how they work. I used to be a Schedule C, now I am a C Corp. I once worked for a company that owned a photographic film processing division, and claimed the filtering of silver from the waste solution as a tax credit under the silver mining recovery credits in the tax code. I can do my own taxes, and I was once audited. They owned me money.

My business is somewhat unique. I am a screen-printer, but I am also a promotional items distributor. Where most people who inhabit both these worlds tend to be primarily one and dabble in the other, I am an expert in both, and our sales are pretty much 50/50. This is not by chance. I grew up in the screen-printing industry, but my fascination with politics has always been to advertising. The first t-shirt I ever printed was IMPEACH NIXON, while I was in high school. Black Prang dye on a white t-shirt. That was pretty much state of the art at the time.

Since I hung out my shingle, I did a t-shirt given to Muhammed Ali, pens for the Grateful Dead, and an American gymnastics competitor in the next Olympics will own something I printed. I have had customers who used to be drug dealers, and have had a customer who was a rising star at Arthur Andersen, moved over to private banking, where he embezzled five million dollars. I've done business with the state government and federal government, agencies, hospitals, people who have set up their own non-profits, small businesses and large corporations. I've even printed people's marriage proposal on a golf tee flag. The

world has come to my door, and I am very lucky for it. I know lots of people in business, and their varying degrees of success. I know how a new business thinks, a middle-manager, an academic, and an experienced owner all see the world. I know what makes them different, and I know what makes them the same.

I also observe myself. The role I occupy is even more interesting. I am a manufacturer. I am an old world artisan, like Ben Franklin and his printing press, but I am also a broker. I can sell you a Bic pen, which I did not manufacture or print. I represent factories, which puts me in a second role as a merchant. I control the marketplace by deciding which factory will get the work for your order, and I get to decide what products I want you to buy. In addition to occupying those two worlds, I am also selling advertising. That finely crafted system of manipulation which did not even exist 200 years ago. Like most things, advertising is a double-edge blade. It can tell you information, like what to do in the case of an accident, or it can tell you a lie, and convince you to believe something that is not true.

It is also, I have come to recognize lately, a way to express our pride. If pride is a sin, then America is awash in sin. Advertising drives our culture. The question I have been puzzling for as long as I can remember is, "What drives advertising?" Remember, it did not exist 200 years ago. It has a life and a hunger all its own. Word of mouth advertising is not good enough, we need to feel like we are doing something proactive, even though the return is usually much less than 3%. As long as we can cover the expense, we don't question the effort. The marketplace has already proven that lawyers can exist without advertising, and most small businesses survive without mega-dollar ad budgets. Despite the obvious, we still think that the world will cease to run without advertising.

The problem is not advertising. Advertising is a symptom of something else that is wrong. Everyday we throw away tons of newspapers, but children go begging for new textbooks. All that printing, and all that paper, all diverted away from our most important responsibility: our children. And no one questions the system? Instead, they point fingers at each other. We are locked into a bi-polar disorder. Mark assumes I am in favor of big government, because if I want to change the role of the corporation, then I must be in favor of big government. Everyone thinks there are only two choices. At one point, we only believed in one choice, that there had to be a king. The marketplace became the second choice. I present a third.

People will continue to make immoral choices under my system, but their drive to make them and their ability to hide them will be more limited. <b>Mark said he was sharing a beer with a friend who wanted to create a better corporation, but couldn't because the system stood in his way. </B>Profit-sharing cannot exist in a vacuum when you are the only company doing it and interest is causing inflation. Under the current system, corporations must be predatory to survive. They are actually victims of the Interest Mechanism. Mark thinks I am attacking them, when what I am doing is protecting them, and with them, all of us.

As Thomas Paine once said, "A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right." The Battle of Lexington and Concord was less than fifty miles from where I sit. So too is Logan Airport, where two planes taxied on a journey that would change the history of the world.

The "real world" has come to pay me a visit, as it did to my fellow citizens 200 some years ago. Violence is

only a short-term solution. At one point, you need to think about the problem, and act on the solution. I am ready. The question is, are you? We only have a minute to be ready, or all will be lost.

Cheers.

## 48. KENNEDY'S PREDICTION: THE EMPLOYED WILL ENVY THE DEAD

Kennedy's prediction that "The Living Will Envy The Dead" is a pretty harrowing idea. Fortunately, the great cataclysm of nuclear winter that Kennedy feared has yet to occur. Nevertheless, his prediction has come true! The living do envy the dead! At least I do.

It appears that all those Americans that can't find work are not properly prepared. Forbes has reported that dead people are earning more money in their deep sleep than most living people are earning when awake. Topping the list is Elvis Presley. He has actually been dead more years than he was performing, and yet he is still making money. Maybe what those saps in the unemployment line need is a jelly donut. If we can get their blood sugar up high enough, then not even death will keep them working. What is wrong with those people?

Elvis made \$40 million, Charles Shultz \$32 million, Tolkein \$22 million and John Lennon \$19 million. George Harrison, who penned the tune Taxman, (when he was still alive), still managed to earn \$16 million while dead! I don't have figures as to if those were pre-tax dollars or not. Wow, if I were dead, then I could be rich too! Death would also lower my living expenses, so I could save more. You can never have enough for a rainy day when you are dead, because you are going to be dead for a long long time. It is best to think ahead and be prepared!

Warren Zevon told us about Lawyers, Guns, and Money. He was a genius. In three words he captured all of humanity. Lawyers (politics), Guns (morality), and Money (economics.) I would love to buy his last CD, but I just can't do it. I just don't see any point in paying a dead man. He was a good man, and I am sure he taught his children how to fly on their own.

There is something dramatically wrong in society when the living are paying the dead. We say we believe in free speech, but it is only free if you pay for it. The cold grip of death is downright toasty as compared to the grip of copyright. Our courtrooms have become a theater of the absurd. Instead of a nuclear winter, we have a graveyard of wealth. The living that think this system works are the zombies.

## 49. LEVI STRAUSS HEADS WEST, LEAVES AMERICA

Yep, it's true. The brand made famous by making jeans for California's Gold Rush has left the country. For good. The last remaining American manufacturing and finishing plants have been closed, and manufacturing is now centered around contractors in fifty different countries, including Mexico, China and Bangladesh.

Their CEO says that they were among the last companies to make the move in the two-decade long shift to overseas subcontracting. I guess "Made in America" now means "you paid too much for this, sucker." All those laid off workers shouldn't have trouble finding work making Jelly donuts.

What exactly is the point of a brand name if the product can be made by any subcontractor? It doesn't represent anything. Time Warner paid AOL something like a half billion dollars for its name, it turned out it wasn't worth anything. Duh!

Apple insists on being a hardware manufacturer, but does it really make anything anymore? Some Disney movies are made by Pixar. Why is it cheaper to hire somebody else to do your own work for you? It should be the opposite. In-house work should yield more control, quality and more profit. The drive for lower costs is like the tail wagging the dog. America is competing with itself and losing.

## 50. REVOLUTION IS OKAY, BUT NOT INFIDATAH

There is a story at CNN about a Muslim football league where some of the players chose team names that were not politically correct. [Click Here](http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/West/12/28/football.furor.ap/index.html)

One of the teams objected to is Intifada. This is ironic since the local soccer team is called Revolution. Evidently killing the king is okay, but if you use a muslim word to say the same thing (uprising) it is not.

To be fair, I think the name choices are unwise. Part of freedom of speech is mutual respect. Given the political realities of the moment, such loaded language is disrespectful.

Unfortunately, mocking others does seem to be a national pastime. Our President did it when campaigning by raising his hand and talking about the integrity of the office. The political left makes movies depicting Bush as a Nazi. [Click Here](http://www.takebackthemedias.com/bushnonazi.html) And now a bunch of kids playing football over winter break is national news.

Some kids have dropped out of the league because they are now afraid for their safety.

Fear is such a cheap commodity. What we most need is the courage to trust. At a minimum, we need mutual respect. Instead, we have in abundance the fear of words and the habit of mocking each other.

The thing we like to mock most is somebody else's false pride. On that score, here is my favorite item on Santa's List. [Click Here](http://www2.warnerbros.com/madmagazine/files/onthestands/ots_437/6.html)

I know, I'm being bad. Bush tries his best. It's just that his best isn't very good. He is the MicroSoft Windows of Presidents, a monopoly of mediocrity.

Back to football. Go Pats!

Do you think Joe Nameth will be giving any interviews again soon? He was very "happy" last week. He even wanted to give the female reporter a kiss. (She declined.)

Football should be about sports and fun, not politics.

**This is the News Report referenced in “Revolution is Okay nut not Infatadah.”**

Football tourney under fire for team names

IRVINE, California (AP) --The idea was innocent enough: A group of young men organize a holiday football tournament and give their teams such innocuous names as “4th and Goal” and “1988’ers.”

It was some of the other team names that raised eyebrows: Intifada, Soldiers of Allah and Mujahideen.

The furor that followed has forced some teams to change their names and a handful of players to quit. It also sparked a debate that threatens to overshadow the tournament, which was planned primarily for young Muslims and scheduled for January 4.

“This was really just supposed to be about the youth playing football. Now it’s become so political that a part of me thinks we shouldn’t even play,” said Tarek Shawky, 29, one of the tournament’s organizers.

Those involved in the league said they never set out to upset or offend anyone. But critics say such names as Intifada and Mujahideen glorify terrorism.

Intifada, “uprising” in Arabic, is a term used by Palestinians for their revolts against Israeli occupation from 1987 to 1993 and over the past three years. Mujahideen, which means “holy warrior,” is associated with several Islamic groups that are on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations.

“The issue is these are words that are linked to real terrorists, real threats, real murders today,” said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

“There shouldn’t be young Americans chanting the name Mujahideen as American soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq are put in danger and attacked daily,” Cooper said. “As for Intifada, it has been a disaster for the Palestinians and the nearly 1,000 Israeli children and parents murdered by suicide bombers.”

Muslim leaders have asked the teams to reconsider the names.

“Sensitizing our youths is our role as adults,” said Hussam Ayloush, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Southern California.

But he also said he believed the players were not being malicious when they decided the names.

“In this case, the choices were totally innocent and meant for a small intra-Muslim tournament whose members all knew what the terms stand for,” Ayloush said. “Unfortunately, we are aware that a few of those terms are being tainted by the abominable actions of a few Muslims.”

Some team members forced to quit

Ayloush and others believe the incident can be used to teach youths about freedom of speech and sensitivity to others.

One member of the Intifada team said a few of his friends were forced to quit because their parents were worried for their safety.

“It’s kind of annoying me how big it’s gotten,” said 16-year-old Mohamad, whose family asked his last name be withheld.

Mohamad, whose family is Palestinian, said little discussion went into selecting the team name.

Mohamad’s mother, Nuha, said she wants her son to play despite the controversy but said her sister is considering withdrawing her own son from the tournament.

The uproar began about a month ago after 18-year-old Sabih Khan, who attends community college, began organizing a football tournament for the New Year’s holiday weekend. Khan had played football in high school.

“I’ve been missing it all these years,” he said.

Although the league was named “Muslim Football,” Khan said it was not limited to Muslims.

He passed out fliers at an Orange County mosque and set up a Web site, inviting teams to register and submit names. Although most submitted names such as “4th and Goal” and “Muslim Football Allstars,” three came under fire.

Since then, the tournament’s founder has received numerous hate e-mails. The team names also prompted a war of words in local newspapers and on talk radio.

“I don’t understand it all. They are just words,” Khan said, pointing to professional teams such as the Washington Redskins, a nickname deemed offensive by some American Indian groups.

But Khan said he also has asked the teams to change their names.

While two teams -- Soldiers of Allah and Mujahideen -- agreed, Intifada has not. Shawky said the team was considering a name change before the tournament.

The league also posted an open letter on the Internet, apologizing “if anyone took offense to what was intended to simply be a positive outlet for Muslim youth.”

The letter also defended the use of the word Intifada, citing the Palestinian movement.

Khan and others said they intend to continue with the tournament.

“Controversy comes and goes,” he said. “Today it’s about the tournament; tomorrow it will be something else.”

## 51. HIGH TECH: WE CAN BUILD, BUT WE CAN'T THINK

<A HREF="http://thegeneralconversation.com/board/viewtopic.php?t=793&highlight=">The General Conversation</A>

<A HREF="http://forums-new.deanforamerica.com/index.php?showtopic=874&st=0">Dean Forum</A>

<A HREF="http://us.denniskucinich.us/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=2145">Kucinich Forum</A>

None of these links are valid.

I have been having a conversation on the same topic in three different forums. The web is very liberating, but it is also time consuming.

High Tech workers are upset that foreign nationals are taking their jobs for less pay. Rather than being upset that these people are being paid slave wages, instead, some are worried about their jobs.

We seem to have learned very little in 200 some years.

As the political campaign heats up, it is clear to me that the voters present the real challenge, not the candidates. Democracy works perfectly, since the confusion that reigns in politics is also what reigns on the street.

Our emphasis on high tech and science based curriculums has given us citizens who do not understand political philosophy. Not enough Liberal Arts. The result: We can build, but we can't think.

Think Different? I wish.

## 52. I'VE LOST COUNT

Sometime ago I responded to an e-mail from Microsoft about CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software.

This is a good case study on the difference between Apple and Microsoft. Microsoft handed my inquiry off to one of their partners, and since then I have received literature, demo software, and so many phone calls that I have lost count. Including another one this morning. I get two types of phone calls. One is from Microsoft to confirm that their partner is following up. The other is from the partner following up.

This sale, I would guess at the outside, is worth at most a few thousand dollars. But what they are looking for is not the sale. Nope, they are looking for the relationship.

Tim recently posted an archive about <http://www.mymac.com/showarticle.php?id=160> Apple marketshare, and I took the time to re-read <http://www.mymac.com/showarticle.php?id=91> my monograph on the Apple business model. I think my analysis still stands. Apple needs to Act Different.

Apple stuff is obviously better and cooler, but without a positive relationship with developers and resellers in the business marketplace, they will always have too much to do. It is essentially a lack of delegation that harms them, nothing else. They trust the marketplace to reward them, when what they should do is trust people.

The very few times I have gotten a direct sales call from Apple, they have been nothing if not anemic. The person on the other end wishes to sell hardware. Beyond my buying a box, they have nothing to sell and nothing to say. And I know from experience, once you have the hardware, they will abandon you on the highway, information or otherwise.

As we ramp up our anticipation for MacWorld, I wonder if we will see the same old consumer-driven Steve Jobs. More toys for the retail masses, another step away from small businesses. More prideful branding, less manufacturing, and a blind eye to the best and most stable market out there.

One thing I forgot to mention on my post about Levi's. A number of years ago their CEO thought they should reduce their reseller base. So they got rid of all the small stores that carried their inventory, and focused instead on their bigger customers, like the GAP. Within a few years Levi's was facing bankruptcy. Duh! I don't have an MBA, but if this is what they teach as intelligent business management, I would rather sleep in. I am sure the big retailers felt like the cat's meow having an exclusive on Levi's jeans. They probably couldn't contain their glee over their new-founded monopoly.

Apple, no doubt, feels the same way about their stores. They have a monopoly with iTunes, OS, Stores and hardware. The more they push for a monopoly status, the weaker they will become. Pride always comes before the fall.

## 53. THE SPIRIT HAS LANDED

It's 12:00 Midnight Saturday, and I have been watching NASA TV on satellite TV. The Spirit has landed on Mars. A signal has been returned. It will take about 15 minutes for the protective covering to deflate. Then, the solar array has to deploy. In 45 minutes or so, they could have pictures back from the red planet. Congratulations to NASA and the team at CalTech JPL. This stuff is so cool. It's amazing what can be accomplished when we work together on a common goal. The team undoubtedly felt a lot of joy and relief at their success, especially in light of the recent Beagle mission by England. While we take it for granted sometimes, there is nothing easy about this stuff.

On a related topic, did you know that you can see the International Space Station when it flies by your town? [Here is the link.](http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/realdata/sightings/cities/index.cgi) Cities are listed around the world.

It amazes me that a bunch of people are sitting in a tin can, whizzing around the Earth, and we can walk out into our back yard to watch them. I don't know what it is that drives man to put himself in the most uncomfortable of situations, just so he can explore "what's there." We did it on sailing ships, we did it on foot, we do it with ideas. Whatever it is, it is wonderful.

### The Death of MacWorld

Well, I was kind of hoping to see a new 20th Anniversary Mac, not that I could justify buying one. But what we did see was actually better for Apple: The end of MacWorld as we know it.

Sure, there was a lot of new and improved, but that is an everyday event at Apple. The only real question is when, (it is never whether,) they will release a new product or update.

By no longer timing upgrades and major product introductions with MacWorld, Apple is now free of the impossible cycle that MacWorld forced on their marketing (and manufacturing) schedule. They sold expensive iPods before Christmas, and had an upgrade before the season started. Now that the season has passed, they have introduced its cheaper priced competitor. They didn't cannibalize their own sales, and a lot of buyers of high end flash players may now be experiencing buyers remorse.

Yes, the sales future looks mighty good for Apple indeed. The marketing department has always been worth their salt, but the marketplace expectations have been near impossible given the death grip of MacWorld.

Steve obviously enjoys being #1. I would say it was his favorite slide.

As I recall, that was the same feeling the big brute on the screen relished. I am still not convinced that we are seeing an overthrow of the establishment; we may be instead seeing its replacement.

Maybe Frodo didn't really destroy the Ring of Power. I hope he did.

It is going to take a lot more than a free poster to convince me.

## 54. ISPECULATE

There is a report that Apple has patented the name “iWrite”. I am not sure where I read it, but since it is in the Patent Office, it isn't a rumor. Of course, that doesn't tell us what it is either. It could be a pen or...

if I speculate, it could be another cool gift for creative professionals and amateurs. Like Garage Band is a gift for musicians, iWrite could be a gift for writers.

Now, this is not only speculation, but also a hopeful projection. Since I like to write, I would like a better software to do it with.

There isn't that much around that does this sort of thing. And since Apple has fallen in love with its iTunes interface, and spread it to the Finder in Panther, it would be easy to follow this trail into other areas. iTunes is just a simple database (emphasis on simple). Writing is just a database of words. They have already created a database of pictures (iPhoto) and movies (iPhoto, Final Cut Pro), so this would seem to be the next logical step.

.....onto something unrelated.

1984 was a book written in 1948 that was about 1948, but everyone thought was about the future. In 1984 Apple released a product that would prevent that future, even though it was already in the present and past. Twenty years into the future, which is now, they kind of claim to have stopped that ugly future from occurring, when it had already existed.

The computer at Virginia Tech looks just like something the Borg would create on Star Trek. They have become the very future they were trying to prevent. Remove a node, and the beast self repairs. Apple is now #1 in many categories, and is reaching for marketplace dominance. Doesn't that sound like the Borg? Resistance is futile. And they have the hardware to prove it.

Tim complains that he should not have to pay for upgrades to iPhoto and iMovie. Sorry Tim.

**Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated. :-)**

## 55. MY TV IS BROKEN -YEAH! MY TV IS BROKEN.

Granted, if it broke last night while the New England Patriots were beating the Tennessee Titans, I would be less happy. But today, who cares. I will catch next weeks game at a friends or at the local hokey independent movie theatre. They have been broadcasting the games on their big screen. They have great popcorn, a hearty pork barbeque sandwich, and even serve beer. It's regular movie seating, facing forward, but between each seat is a little spacer table for your stuff. They even have waitress service. Remember when the customer counted? That was how long ago this place was built.

The kids haven't even made a squawk about the TV. This was my hope. The incessant fighting of my two youngest dissipated today. Somehow the noise and blather of the damn thing sets the wrong tone. "Can I eat in the living room?" "I'll be right in, right after this." Blah, blah.

Unlike most Americans, we have only one TV. Instead, we have three computers. An iBook, a PowerBook, and the original G4 Tower. There is more on the web than will ever be on TV, and, I will guiltily admit, like to be up-to-date. The stuff is so good now, I can't even find a reason to replace it.

For all my critique of Apple, I consider my purchase of an iBook three years ago a life altering event. Far bigger than my purchase of my lowly IIsi, many years ago. That only revolutionized my business. The laptop, it is turning out, is revolutionizing my life and business. (My wife seems to have adjusted to being a computer widow.)

When we first got married, we didn't have a TV for a couple of years. Life was great then. I read more, and listened to more music. The world is better through a newspaper anyway. With the web, we now can get all three at once. If we could end copyright control and the the content really flow, imagine what a world it could be. The Great Library of Alexandria burned. We can rebuild it, and store multiples all over the planet, if we only had the wisdom to see it.

So, no TV. I will miss Smallville and Survivor, and a couple of other occasional shows. I know this won't last forever, but I am going to enjoy it while it lasts.

## 56. LIFE IS A BITE OF JEWISH SALAMI

I was told a story the other day that I thought was worth sharing.

The setting is the island of Okinawa at the end of World War II. Japan has surrendered, but there are many Japanese soldiers in the mountains who are unaware that peace has been declared. They are hiding in the caves, trapped, and don't know what to do. The American soldiers are keeping a watch on them, but not fighting with them.

The story involves two American soldiers, a Jewish man, who has become friends with a Regular Joe. The two get along fine, and the Regular Joe tells him that he never met a Jew-boy before. By using his new friend as a standard, Regular Joe finds that maybe some of his pre-conceptions have been wrong. "You are alright in my book", he tells him, or something to that effect.

One of the things that the Jewish soldier gets from home is salami. He shares it with Regular Joe who enjoys it very much. Breaking bread as it were, the Regular Joe discovers not only a new world of flavor, but a whole new culture too. He tells his friend, whenever he gets some of that sausage from home, that he would like a piece.

One day Regular Joe tells his Jewish friend that yesterday he had shot one of the Japs. "He came out of the cave and was walking around, so I shot him," he proudly explains. Not only did he kill him, but he teased him by shooting a few close volleys first, to make him dance. This was an act of murder, disguised by war. Disgusted, the Jewish soldier never shares his salami with Regular Joe ever again.

In Washington D.C. you will find a monument of the famous posed image of American soldiers raising the American Flag at Iwo Jima. On the plaque it reads, "Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue" in reference to the brave Marines that fought there. Well, we know there was at least one soldier in the Japanese theater to whom these words do not apply. The memorial cost \$850,000. All the money was raised privately. This false icon is a great example of blind pride, and shows how monuments betray the very people they are meant to honor. The desire to feed ones ego is stronger than the desire to feed a neighbor. Soldiers go begging for funds at the VA. Let them eat marble.

Not surprisingly, the plaque says nothing about the murder that took place at Okinawa. Justice in this world is elusive. The next time you have a mouthful of food, take a moment to chew on the value of a man's life. Is it only worth a bite of Jewish salami? The monuments we build to cover up our sins mask the difficult choices we make.

Locally, in Worcester Mass., they will be making a monument to fallen firefighters soon. Money that could be better spent to house the homeless that started the fire. In my town, a group of citizens have built a monument to honor other civic minded citizens. Rather than following the example of commitment and self-sacrifice, we remind ourselves of their heroic efforts by doing nothing of value. Our nation is full of bobble-head heroes. Brains are not connected to hearts, and the result is sour.

## 57. FAITH BASED FOLLY AND NON-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

If the greatest plight to mankind is the Interest Mechanism, then the second greatest ailment is the concept of non-profit corporations. The Presidents idea to dissolve the role of government by shifting the burden of collective responsibility to faith-based organizations is scurrilous.

The American tradition of non-profits starts from the concept of the separation of Church and State. As such, the Church is seen as a separate and free entity, and removed of any obligation to the state. The Vatican is its own country within the borders of Italy, and this solution is applied to all churches within our country. The sovereignty of God is expressed in the same way that Native Americans have sovereignty and foreign embassies have sovereignty on their land. This sovereignty allows one to be distinct, and unaccountable, from the body politic. It is, in essence, a political divorce. The land and the history of the nation is shared, but not any collective responsibility to one another. Churches are free of tax obligations, and non-profits are granted the same status of imitation sovereignty.

The presumption is that these organizations answer to a higher and more pure duty, and are therefore free of the pedantry of government. Government, after all, is nothing better than a necessary evil. By limiting the ability of government to exercise political control of religion, particularly through a tax burden, it is assumed that the body politic will be better protected. Non-profit corporations are an extension of the same logic. Unfortunately, the logic is faulty, both by extension and from the original assumption. The solution, while very old, is not a solution at all, but an extension of the original problem.

The original problem is that man must live under a system of authority. Whether we pledge allegiance to the king or the rule of law, we must recognize both a source and a process for central authority. Every society and subsystem is arranged according to the pattern of the family. There is a head father figure, a secondary leader like the wife, and the subjects who are its children. In America, our three branches of government serve the same roles. The President is the father, the judiciary is the wife, and the congress the subjects. In a school, you have the principal, the teachers, and the students. In the school system, you have the superintendent, the schools, and the voters. In a business, you have the owner, the workers, and the customers. This pattern is everywhere.

Under monarchy, this pattern was God, the King, and the people. There was always a conflict between God and the King, because those who represented God saw their family as God, themselves, and the people. The government was insinuating itself as a fourth party in their trinity. History can be understood as the story of the alliances and conflicts between God and the King. Democracy was the attempt to remove religious interpretation permanently out of the body politic, so that the common morality of religion could bind the men together, rather than the specific interpretation of scripture being a perpetual source of division.

Essentially, what democracy does is reverse the hierarchical order of the family. Rather than God, King/ government, and then the people, it makes the people the head of the family. The people appoint the government, and God is left precariously unconnected. The tax exemptions and non-profit status of

charities and churches thus removes God from the family, and devalues His authority completely. This arrangement of power is rejected both by conservative Christians and what we call Muslim extremists. So they use their political power as a tool to reassert the primary authority of God. And, when political power fails, they resort to force.

Morality, it turns out, is a double-edged sword. It can provide the justification for ending slavery, but it can also provide the moral justification for the North to wage war on the South. Morality in a vacuum does not prevent abuses any more readily, perhaps, than the morality of the King. A king, because of his authority, could have simply freed the slaves, had he been so inclined. What is commonly regarded as a battle of political will, then and now, should be seen as a battle of moral interpretation.

The issue of gay unions, for example, is based on the fact that the government recognizes marriages and provides certain tax and insurance benefits associated with that marriage. But, marriage is not a governmental affair, it is a moral and religious affair. The government has no need to recognize any religious ceremony if there is a wall of separation between Church and State. The government, by establishing a religious sacrament in its law, broke the barrier of separation. We fell back into the historic pattern of the intermingling, as those who desire God's authority as uppermost desired. The premise for gay unions is the same political will to assert the primacy of the people's political rights that the conservatives used to reestablish God's authority. We are back to fighting religious views again., and the intermingling is taken for granted.

The modern day partisanship of our democracy can then be expected to be deadlocked forever, unless we are willing to take a second look at this arrangement. God is not going to go away because he has tax-exempt status.

The system we have today essentially allows anyone who fills out a piece of paper to be exempt from paying taxes to the federal treasury. The concept of non-profit grows wider and wider. The government, which is charged for the responsibility of caring for the good of all the people, has delegated part of its authority to anyone who can fill out a form. While the charities claim that their intention is the greater good, their first act is one of selfishness and withdrawal to administer to their pet peeve. Rather than building the community, they serve to weaken its foundation, not by the acts they perform, but by their financial separation from the body politic.

The church and non-profits receive its funds from the general population, the same population that it is committed to serving. The net effect is that we have set up a competition between the government and the non-profits. Marketplace theory posProtesting for Moral Freedomtulates that competition is good, but both organizations are not seeking profit, they are seeking the greater good. By competing, they essentially drain each others funds back and forth, duplicate effort and, unlike in the for-profit world, neither will go out of business. They will simply drain more funds from the general population, and use the funds less effectively, to insure their survival.

Thus, non-profits and the Church, by being separated, weaken the government and the society, not strengthen it. The balance that the American Revolution hoped to achieve has failed. The President's proposal for faith-based funding accelerates the growth of non-profits, when the proper choice is to rein

them in. The sovereignty of the Church and non-profits needs to be ended, not promoted. They are citizens, and should share in the same responsibilities as all of the citizens. Separate but equal is not a workable solution.

If democracy is to work, then morality and God need to be more clearly integrated into the family of society. What was assumed to be a political problem two hundred years ago was really one of taxation and authority. The political parties have squared off on opposite sides of different issues. Republicans want authority, and Democrats want government funded protections. Both sides try to use the other's argument for their advantage. So Democrats argue for the authority to tax, and Republicans argue for the individual's freedom from government. We didn't really defeat the King, we split him in two.

The missing piece is morality, and funding faith-based charities will make it worse. The problem is the tax code and our banking habits. Neither are moral. Dumping the failures of government on the churches may re-create the divisive history of the past by relinquishing the authority of the State to the Church. Both the Church and the State live off unearned funds. Once the Church reassumes its power through wealth and political control, we are essentially back where we started from.

The solution is to end the tax-exemption status of non-profit entities, including the church, by changing the tax code so we tax goods at the beginning of the manufacturing cycle, rather than at the end of the selling cycle. That way, everything manufactured is automatically taxed, and it begins to end the semi-sovereign relationship of non-profits with the body politic.

The bigger problem, and the cause for the need for charities and evermore government services, is the existence of unearned income. While unearned income is a mainstay for the government and non-profits, it is also the preferred choice of the people too. The stock market and the Interest Mechanism provide a way for those who do not work to benefit greatly. If someone is going to be paid when they do not work, that means that there must be someone somewhere who is doing work without getting paid. Where before this had been the pleasure of only the King and the Church, now it is the pleasure of everyone in our society. We all feed off the unearned income, which means that much of the work we do goes unpaid. The inflation, which is caused by the interest, creates the effect of an economy where one can work harder and earn less, even though the dollar amount seems higher. This increases the need for more and more charities. The President's proposal of government funded charities invites economic collapse and political regression. We need to redraft the tax code, and alter the role of corporations.

## 58. PROTESTING FOR MORAL FREEDOM

<A HREF="http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3405453.stm">BBC article</A>

Muslims are up in arms about the French ban on head scarfs. Thomas Paine would be happy with their standing up for their rights.

I'm not.

Their opinion on the issue is correct. Banning them from wearing headscarfs is the same as telling women that they MUST go topless. It is grossly unfair. Their wearing a piece of clothing is not a crime.

Everyone then assumes, therefore, that they should redress their grivences. Martin Luther King did it with his March on Washington. We are celebrating his choices on Monday, so therefore we should also celebrate the Muslim protests. It is the same history in the making.

We should no more judge a man by the clothing she wears than by the color of his skin.

Making judgements is what all these conflicts are about. The French have judged clothing to be a criminal act.

The Muslims have been driven to the street not because of any act they committed, but by the lack of protection from their fellow countrymen. The Christians and the Jews and the Buddhists and the athiets all stood by and did nothing while an angry mob violated the rights of the innocent. It was decided legally and properly, but the mob exerted its will just the same. Those who feared more groundless conflict between citizens think they are protecting the peace by forcing the victim to amend its behavior.

Now the Muslims have become the mob on the street. They seek a new role, rather than being the victim, they want to be the victimizer. This is the same thing that occurred when we ran the Tories out of America. They were free to stay, as long as they did what we forced them to do. So they left.

Democracy has now spread around the world, but its primary characteristic is still mob rule. The only checks and balances on the mob is morality. But, it is morality that the Muslim women are trying to express. Instead of a separation of Church and State, we now have the government attacking the Muslim religion, which is a source of the morality that the democracy needs to maintain the balance of self-government. Because the rights of the Muslims have been abandoned by their countrymen, they find themselves on the street arguing for their rights, and in the same process, adding imbalance to the system that gave them the right to protest.

In other words, the wrong people are on the street. In the same way that the Freedom Riders went to the south to open up the polling places for the blacks, it is the non-muslims that should be protesting the ban on headscarfs. When individuals are forced to protect their own rights, then the system is failing.

A moral behavior is when you put the interests of another before your own. Democracy requires that we be responsible for each other, and expect less for ourself. The protest, as well as the complacency of the countrymen, are both the same problem. Both political choices are immoral.

For democracy to work, people must be willing to choose the narrow path of protecting others and not themselves. You have to have faith in the system. It is the same moral faith that one must have in God. The separation of Church and State is separation from organized religion, not from the Bible. Every religion claims the Bible as their own (blind pride), rather than living by the words found inside.

Democracy, when seen as the system of free choice and individual self-determination, is intellectual fraud. Democracy requires one to be bound to his duties and responsibilities. It is about our honor, and protecting the honor of others. Slavery, and the banning for women of their headscarfs, is the same act of stripping someone of their dignity. It dishonors not only the victim, but also the person who allowed it to happen.

**This is the news report referenced in “Protesting for Moral Freedom.”**

Headscarf ban sparks new protests

Muslim protests have been taking place in France and other countries against a French bill which would ban headscarves from state schools.

Up to 5,000 protesters, mainly Muslim women in scarves, rallied in Paris.

President Jacques Chirac announced a ban on overtly religious symbols in schools last month after an official report into state secularism.

Many of France’s five million Muslims see it as an attack on their religious and human rights.

Apart from the Islamic headscarf, the ban - scheduled to be enacted before the next academic year in France - would also affect the Jewish skullcap, big crucifixes and Sikh turbans.

The government proposed the new law as a measure to safeguard France’s secular tradition.

‘Inflammatory rallies’

The afternoon demonstrations in Paris and other French cities were organised by a small group, the Party of French Muslims (PMF), which is regarded by many in France as a radical Islamist organisation, the BBC’s Alan Little reports from Paris.

One banner condemned “secular fundamentalism”.

An estimated 2,400 opponents of the ban rallied in London, where there was also a small counter-demonstration.

“The Islamic hijab is enslaving women, not freeing them,” Sohaila Sharifa, one of the 30 or so counter-demonstrators, told the Associated Press.

Outside the capital cities, including Brussels where about 1,000 protesters appeared, the largest demonstrations were held in the French regions. There were small rallies, too, in the Middle East.

An estimated 3,500 marched in Lille, 1,800 in Marseille, 1,500 in Mulhouse and hundreds in other French cities, police and organisers said.

Scores of Muslim women and girls demonstrated outside the French embassies in Beirut and Amman, while in the Palestinian territories about 300 women turned out in the West Bank city of Nablus.

## 59. FIRST, KILL THE INTELLECTUALS

<A HREF="http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/01/21/students.website.ap/index.html">ARTICLE</A>

Is it me, or does our society seem like it is fracturing?

Split elections, impeachments, planes flying into buildings, war on foreign lands, pollution, anger, hunger, unemployment, lies.

I guess I should go golfing. I can't play worth a darn, but I am sure somebody is holding a fund-raiser. That way I can feel good about myself. I can help people by golfing, right? Steak dinner, free t-shirt, a bag of goodies. Isn't that what charity is all about?

In some parts of the world, they golf for al Qaeda. They call it "charity," too. Raising money to kill people, giving to charity by having fun. We both do the same thing. It is a total mental disconnect between the work of the hands and the mind.

The above articles is about college students who want to document the "errors" of their professors. While it proves that you cannot teach to a closed mind, it is also very curious. Isn't it the teacher who is supposed to do the grading?

People like to think that heat sheds light. It doesn't, it just spreads a flame. I think I understand now why Nero played while Rome burned. His was serenading his love goodbye.

Unfortunately, I have no talent. Even Apple's Garage Band can't help me. I'll just have to put on some music. Springsteen's New York Serenade is my favorite song.

Ahhh..this song is so sweet. There will always be hope.

**This is the news report referenced in “First, Kill the Intellectuals.”**

GOP students launch complaint Web site

BOULDER, Colorado (AP) --Republican students at the University of Colorado launched a Web site to gather complaints about left-leaning faculty members, saying they want to document discrimination against conservative students and indoctrination to the liberal viewpoint.

“We want concrete examples of bias in our arsenal when we go to the administration, the regents and the Legislature,” said Brad Jones, 20, chairman of the College Republicans, who launched the Web site last week.

The CU College Republicans are affiliated with Students for Academic Freedom, a national organization started by California conservative activist David Horowitz, who is pushing a Colorado effort to protect students from what the group sees as harassment or discrimination based on political beliefs.

Most faculty and many Democrats deny liberal indoctrination exists on campuses.

“I’m shocked the students would resort to this,” said Barbara Bintliff, a CU law school professor and chairwoman of the Boulder Faculty Assembly. “I’m concerned they may wind up with a blacklist”

Travis Leiker, 22, president of the College Democrats at CU, said classrooms are full of different perspectives. “I think the conservative students who feel there is a bias are more afraid of hearing points of view different from their own,” he said.

Lawmakers are also involved. Republican State Senate President John Andrews called for all state universities to submit their anti-discrimination policies in November.

Conservative lawmakers introduced a resolution last week calling for the defense of students’ First Amendment rights, including expression “based solely on viewpoint.”

## 60. 30 PIECES OF SILVER

Link: <http://www.cnn.com/2004/SHOWBIZ/Movies/01/22/leisure.gibson.reut/index.html>

I look forward to the release of *Passion*. I wonder if it is going to be released under the guises of the normal Hollywood machine. It certainly looks that way.

All the hoopla and fear of what the release will entail, I suspect, is overblown. It is just a movie. Maybe a great movie, about a great mystery, but it is still a movie.

You would think though, given the subject matter, and the passion of Mel Gibson, that it wouldn't even be released at all. Rather, it would be shared with the world.

When I put a lot of my LP's onto CD's a couple of years ago, one of them was *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It didn't come out very well. It is so old that it has sides 1 and 4 matched on one LP, and sides 2 and 3 on the other. This, back from the days when LP's were played on a drop spindle... Hmm, no wonder the iPod is so popular. The ability to play music for hours on end was lost when we made the move to high fidelity.

Anyway, when I happened to be in a record store I looked up the cost of the CD. The good news was that it had been digitally "remastered." The bad news was it cost \$50. So much for "licensing", I knew I wasn't going to get a deal repurchasing music that I already owned. That street only goes one way.

We know about this story of Jesus, and all the other great religious tales, because men spent their days and nights hand-copying these stories down through the years. In many cases, their whole life was dedicated to it. I feel happy for Mel Gibson that he finally got to use modern technology to tell the story that was burning in his heart.

Still, I remember standing in the store, and looking at the \$50 price tag, and wondering to myself, "What Would Jesus Do?"

I didn't buy it.

**This is the News Report referenced in “30 Pieces of Silver.”**

Gibson: ‘Worst to come’ over ‘Passion’

ORLANDO, Florida (Reuters) --The controversy that has followed Mel Gibson’s film about the death of Christ could be persecution or just inspired publicity, but the film-maker himself predicted “the worst is yet to come” on Wednesday at a meeting with 4,500 evangelical Christian pastors.

A day after reports that a high Vatican official denied that Pope John Paul gave a thumbs up to his film, “The Passion of the Christ,” Gibson prepared to show it to another hand-picked audience, this time the Global Pastors Network conference meeting in Orlando.

As with past screenings, media were barred, as were Jewish groups worried that the film could incite anti-Semitism if it suggests Jewish authorities in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago were largely responsible for the crucifixion of the man Christians worship as the incarnation of God.

On Tuesday, an aide to the pope denied media reports that the pontiff had praised the film’s Biblical accuracy, saying, “The Holy Father told no one of his opinion of this film.”

Gibson did not mention the Vatican denial when he addressed the pastors. He thanked them for their prayers, but warned, somewhat ominously, “I anticipate the worst is yet to come. I hope I’m wrong. I hope I’m wrong.”

Gibson said the film gestated in his imagination for 12 years as he meditated on the gospel stories of a God who became human so he could pay the price for human sin.

“He could have done it by pricking his finger and shedding a little blood. He didn’t; he wanted to go all the way,” Gibson said.

While Gibson thanked the pastors for their support, his publicity director, Paul Lauer, urged them to send youth groups to the R-rated flick when it opens on February 25 on 2,000 screens in the United States.

The rating, apparently based on the graphic depiction of the crucifixion, means those under age 17 must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian.

Lauer predicted that if the film posts good numbers on its opening weekend, “I think there’ll be a lot of powerful people in Hollywood saying, ‘Somebody get me a Jesus picture.’ “

## 61. WHILE WE WERE SLEEPING

There is a news report that Vice-President Dick Cheney and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia went duck hunting recently. I don't know about you, but that doesn't seem like impartial justice to me. Especially in light of the Supreme Court deciding the outcome of the last Presidential election.

Am I paranoid? Well, there is also an article about Eugene Scalia, the son of the justice, who is himself a lawyer for the Department of Labor, attacking a whistle-blower within the Department of Justice. The usual role of the Department of Labor is to protect whistle-blowers, here it is the opposite. Could it have something to do with the fact that his Daddy is on the Board of Directors of American Justice?

We have the son of a justice working within the administration working against whistle-blowers of the justice department while the top of the administration is chummy with the top of the judicial branch. This is not exactly a separation of powers.

And, in the background, we have a republican insider complaining about a new nepotism within the Republican party, and the current president is the son of a recent president. A family whose grandfather did business with the Nazi's, and is also friends and business associates with the bin Laden's.

I suspect a whole boatload of crimes are buried in an oil tanker at sea, if you believe that man is motivated by greed. But the bigger question remains, what is it that is causing this balance of power to fail systemically. Expose a few bad guys, and someone new will fill their place. The system of checks and balances is a myth, and is not working. The marketplace theory we are complacent with does not exist. And now it is eating away at our laws. Without laws protecting the weak, we are all screwed. When laws are an instrument of the strong, then there is no shelter from them.

Rationalism is a scientific interpretation of society that every cause has an effect. Simply explaining away these power grabs as the failure of the individuals does not address the real problem: the system of checks and balances is failing. Since money is at the heart of these power grabs, then logically our banking is at the heart of their opportunity to lie and cheat their way to the top. As Willie Sutton the bank robber said when asked why he robbed banks, 'because that's where the money is.' But we shouldn't forget what Theodore Roosevelt said. "A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad."

Big Oil and Big Railroads. The Military-Industrial Complex. Old news, or today's news?

Maybe it is just a bad habit, passed down through the generations. If you are told a lie, and you believe it, how would you ever know it is a lie? If you are born a prince, then you would expect one day to become a king.

## 62. WHAT'S NEW?

Do you remember a few years ago when Steve Jobs popped a cork about a supplier who let slip a product announcement the day before the Keynote. I forget who or what it was, what I remember was the angry iCEO. This was long before I had any intentions of becoming a writer, but I had sent good 'ol Steve an e-mail. I've been in that habit of doing so, to offer suggestions, congratulations, and complaints. (I consider myself an equal opportunity blowhard.)

Anyway, blowhards are what I want to discuss. What exactly is news? In my letter then to Steve Jobs I suggested that new hardware was not exactly a surprise. Detroit rolls out new models every year whether they are needed or not. Everyone (should) know that the selling cycle is a bunch of hype, and acting like a used car salesman only draws attention away from the car. MacWorld is just a car show for geeks. Beyond a small universe, and those waiting to make a purchase, no one really cares.

Did you see the new toaster from Black & Decker? This years model has..bla bla bla. Who cares. I think Maytag invented a washing machine that uses so little hot water that it can pay for itself over a few years. The fact that it is new and better didn't move me to go buy a new washing machine. Mac stuff is just stuff. Good stuff. Better than a PC usually. Fun and powerful. It lets you do new things, and old things better, but "New" is a vague concept. My IIsi with a 12" screen was new one day, and it was wonderful. If I had to live on 16mhz today I think I would read a book instead.

So what's new? Besides technology, not much. My kids watch movies that are remakes of old movies. Sitcoms play the same situations over and over again. The players change, but the love triangles and other plot formats remain. If something strikes a chord with viewers, it gets picked up by other writers and networks. Like lemmings over a cliff, our culture goes rushing to whatever is the next hottest thing.

Since technology is the only thing new, it is always important to include new technology in the same old remade products. Automobiles come with ABS Brakes. Computers come with NVidia Cards. Whatever is new is better, since it must have been made to replace the old, which was inferior. In the lack of anything different, "more" will substitute. More roomy, more horsepower. If you can't make it better, make it bigger. Or, like the miniPod, make it smaller and call it better. Whatever you do, make sure you call it new and better. Don't admit a blunder. Wrap it up in the next improvement, and bury it at sea with a heavy rock.

So, what's new? Well, if you look in the newspaper, nothing. The news stories have been the same as they have always been. America is at war. The Church is pissed off at somebody. People are complaining about jobs, healthcare, taxes and inflation. The weather is changing, and the prediction is days late. A new technology was invented. People's shopping habits are changing. A big company got caught either screwing its employees or customers or both. Too much fraud is keeping the government working overtime. Somebody in authority has betrayed their trust. Somebody will tell you that this is an especially critical moment in history (I've fallen into that one lately), and that everything is going to hell in a hand basket. (whatever that means.)

The world has journalists all over the world checking facts and making sure we all know "what's new." The

salespeople are doing the same thing with their latest gizmo. The question that gnaws me is the opposite. Why is it that nothing is new? Why doesn't this new technology and all these machines doing the work of literally hundreds of men not make a difference? Why is what's new exactly the same as what's old?

Think Different? Hmmm. Even revolution is an old idea.

## 63. 100 MILLION FREE SONGS

Is it me, or does the Apple website with all the Pepsi bottles look like the an Attack of the Clones?

100 Million free songs in a nation with 260 million people? Those are pretty impressive numbers. Soon everyone will have a music file that the Mothership will only allow you to play on three devices, unless you send an inter-stellar request to change devices. Central Command will demand our trust and compliance.

Sure, maybe I'll change my habits to drink a couple of bottles of gut-rot, so I can troll through the iTunes Store looking for a gem or two. But, I'd still rather listen at [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com) and support the artist directly.

This technology is wonderful, but it is in the wrong person's hands. Think Different is about empowering the little guy, the individual. Isn't that what the i refers too?



## 64. DON'T STEAL WHAT I AM TRYING TO GIVE AWAY

My team won the Superbowl yesterday. I am very happy for Adam Vinatieri. Had he missed that kick, he would have felt that he lost the game. He would have become New England's new Bill Buckner. (Okay, maybe not quite. Poor Bill didn't win one and then lose one.) Carolina, on the other hand, lost as a team. And just barely. Tom, "gee I had better march down the field now" Brady, does what he always seems to do: Defeat defeat.

I missed Janet's exposure. I'm not sure what the fear of the human anatomy is all about. They shake it, talk about, accentuate it, play act the mating ritual, and even call it titillation. But, whatever you do, don't view one in public. But, if you build one in marble, then that's okay.

It was thrilled to see the glass shards pops commercial. I know I am not alone in viewing this world as more than a little bit insane. Complacent morons need to be wrestled free of the brainless ideas that control their minds. Let's start with Pepsi, Steve Jobs, and the RIAA.

That commercial "I fought the law, and the law won" was disgusting, vile, putrid pornography. Young children were being coerced to perform slavish acts by those in authority for the crime of listening to music. A product deemed so valuable that the company is now giving it away for free!!!!

Here in Massachusetts, the Catholic Church is on a rampage about same sex marriages. If you do a little digging, you can find a Supreme Court decision from 1958 discussing the Virginia statute regarding inter-racial marriages. It was argued that God created separate continents for separate races and that the comingling of the races was unnatural.

So, barely a year after the shepherds have been exposed for laying with the lambs, we are now to believe the Church is full of political wisdom. I doubt their unnatural experience was the proper path to wisdom. We have become a nation and a world that cannot recognize the difference between a sin and a crime.

This is not new. Christ was publically tried and executed too. The use of the law by complacent morons "who know not what they do" to follow a law decided within the vacuum of democracy, is always how tyranny usurps the authority of justice.

Everyone in New England will be lining up buying championship T-shirts this morning. People will be thrilled with the free music they get with each bottle of Pepsi. Oh, life in the bubble is just fine. And the kids will be grateful for the mercy that Pepsi and Apple meted out to ease the stings of the RIAA. Yes, every prostitute is happy to get home alive at the end of the day. They are thankful for whatever crumb of victory they can gather. I don't blame Apple or Pepsi for this prostitution, I blame the RIAA. And I blame you and me. We are the complacent morons that protect the vaporous property of sound while we prosecute the children. It is quite a lesson we are teaching our young.

Go Team!

## 65. THE DOLLAR'S NOT-SO-SCARY SWOON

[http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/jan2004/nf20040130\\_2831\\_db013.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/jan2004/nf20040130_2831_db013.htm)

In other words, foreigners are buying all our assets, our jobs are going overseas, but it is only an election ploy, so we should not be concerned.

The annual budget deficit will soon be \$515 Billion? And the plan to raise revenue is to cut taxes?

I know a lot of people who travel overseas as part of their job. Maybe we are seeing the beginnings of a reverse migration. America will soon be the the intelligent serf state, where the third world will be the laboring serf states.

But as long as BusinessWeek and the President says that this house of cards will not implode, then we should not think about it. Right?

The Great Depression and the rise of fanaticism (left and right) worldwide could never occur again because of American choices. Right? We're too smart for that. That would be like going back to Vietnam for a second helping.

John Lennon was right: POWER TO THE PEOPLE, but it all depends on how you treat your woman back home.

## **This is the News Report referenced in “The Dollar’s Not-So-Scary Swoon.”**

JANUARY 29, 2004

### SOUND MONEY

By Christopher Farrell

#### The Dollar’s Not-So-Scary Swoon

Despite all the angst the greenback is generating, once put into perspective the situation isn’t nearly as dire as it seems

The news wires carry the same headline almost every day: The dollar is falling against the euro. Indeed, the greenback is down some 35% compared to the single European currency over the past two years. The buck has also lost ground against the Japanese yen.

That’s sowing concern around the world. The potential peril of a dollar crisis caused by America’s twin federal budget and current-account deficits was a topic of heated discussion when the world’s elite recently met in Davos, Switzerland (see BW Online, 1/26/04, “The Falling Dollar’s World of Hurt”). The Bush Administration’s apparent policy of allowing a weak currency in an election year, which bolsters the GOP’s political fortunes in manufacturing states, is sure to raise hackles when the finance ministers of the world’s seven largest industrial countries, the G-7, meet in Boca Raton, Fla., the first week of February.

The main fear is that investors will lose confidence in the dollar, sending U.S. interest rates skyrocketing, disrupting international trade, and risking a global recession. It’s not hard to spin out a disaster scenario after the Congressional Budget Office’s recent calculation that the federal budget deficit will hit a record \$477 billion this year. The accumulated deficit over the next decade could total over \$2 trillion, projects the nonpartisan think tank for Capitol Hill.

STILL BUYING AMERICAN. Yet the growing sense that a dollar crisis looms -- while it can’t be dismissed -- may be exaggerated. After all, the Treasury market rallied after the CBO issued its gloomy budget forecast. The stock market barely skipped a beat as it rose to levels last reached before the terrorist attack of September 11. The Federal Reserve Board, which employs more economists than any other American institution, held monetary policy steady during its latest Federal Open Market Committee meeting on Jan. 28.

And far from losing confidence in the U.S., foreign investors continue to snap up American assets, including stocks, bonds, and companies -- despite the sell-off following the Fed’s decision to gently remind investors that the central bank likely will need to raise rates sometime this year.

The problem with the dollar-disaster scenario is that looking at the greenback through the lens of the euro vastly overstates the decline. The euro’s strength largely reflects the European Central Bank’s tight monetary policy. The ECB’s benchmark interest rate is twice the Fed’s, and money sensitive to interest rate differentials is flowing to the Continent.

FURTHER OUT OF BALANCE. The rub is that America's record current-account deficit reflects a world that remains too dependent on the U.S. economy. The faster the U.S. expands, the more imbalanced trade and financial markets may become unless Europe and Japan begin embracing policies to spur their domestic economic growth.

The dollar actually isn't down all that much compared to a more diverse basket of currencies that matter to American manufacturers and service companies. The Fed's broad trade-weighted dollar index is about 12% lower than its high of about a year ago. Even that drop may be overstated, according to a new report by the global economic and strategy research team at UBS Limited led by chief economist George Magnus.

The UBS researchers created a "current-account-weighted index." The current account captures America's economic relationship with the rest of the world, including trade in goods, services, and investment flows. The UBX index comprises those nations with the biggest impact on the current account: Canada, Mexico, the euro-zone, Japan, Britain, as well as a rough proxy for China (since some of the necessary data aren't available). The result? The dollar had actually risen in value into the end of 2003.

Now, any currency index is crude, and the numbers can be massaged different ways. Still, allowing for some drawbacks, it's clear that the dollar isn't a weak, let alone crisis-prone, currency. What investors should keep in mind is that the greenback's current perceived weakness says far more about politics and economics in Europe and to a lesser degree in Japan than it does about what's going on in the U.S.

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Farrell is contributing economics editor for BusinessWeek. His Sound Money radio commentaries are broadcast over Minnesota Public Radio on Saturdays in nearly 200 markets nationwide. Follow his weekly Sound Money column, only on BusinessWeek Online

## 66. I AM NOT ALONE ON THIS

I am not the only one disgusted with the new Pepsi ad, as the letters at the Register demonstrate. But, I suspect that Apple thought that they were helping these kids pay their fines, not exploiting them.

letters at the Register

<http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/35291.html>"><http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/35291.html>

article at the Register<br>

<http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/35259.html>"> <http://www.theregister.co.uk/content/6/35259.html>

Bill Stiteler at Applelinks thinks this opinion is looney. his article is here:

[http://www.applelinks.com/pm/more.php?id=631\\_0\\_1\\_0\\_M](http://www.applelinks.com/pm/more.php?id=631_0_1_0_M) (reference no good)

The road to hell is always paved with good intentions.

One person makes a mistake, another person defends it.

## **This is the News Report referenced in “I Am Not Alone On This.”**

Double Jeopardy for kids caught in Pepsi Apple promo  
Superbowl Shame

By Andrew Orłowski in San Francisco

Published Sunday 1st February 2004 11:18 GMT

Get The Register's new weekly newsletter for senior IT managers delivered to your in-box, [click here](#).

Four children bullied by the Recording Industry Association of America will re-enact their shame for tens of millions of TV viewers today, at the behest of two giant American corporations: Apple Computer and Pepsi Cola Inc.

Instead of using actors to dramatize their shame, the RIAA, Apple and Pepsi have forced the children themselves to conform with the copyright regime, and to look suitably browbeaten as a series of captions reads: INCRIMINATED ... ACCUSED ... BUSTED ... CHARGED.

Is this a medieval costume drama? A low-budget dramatization of some era of America's dark and troubled past, as recorded by Hawthorne, when public humiliations were commonplace? Or is it some strange and sadistic imported Japanese game show - the kind where people assent to be filmed eating worms ?

No, it's a home-grown artifact which will be broadcast at great expense across the nation during the annual US Superbowl sport event today. The advertisement features four victims of the RIAA's legal jihad wearing the Scarlet Letter of their own shame for the benefit of the TV cameras - and quite disgustingly, the RIAA insisted that the agency couldn't hire stand-in actors to replay the script, asking that the 'perpetrators' play themselves : a move which is likely to be remembered as one of the greatest public relations disasters in history.

But let's bear with it. This shameful advertisement - which apparently cost Pepsi (and not Apple, we're relieved to report) as much as \$2 million, was entirely home grown, and has a very moral payload. The broadcast encourages children to buy as much teeth-rotting Pepsi soda as they can in the hope of finding a token that allows them to a free, DRM-infected piece of music.

Lucky them!

Ironies abound, as you might imagine. Where shall we start?

Well Apple Computer isn't the only party that wants to exploit abused children, on this most of American of Sundays. MoveOn made a submission, also featuring children, but found itself rejected because it was deemed to represent a 'special interest group'. We're not sure what vacuum these arbiters of public taste live in. But with three of the four constituents of the entertainment industry - consumers, device manufacturers and artists - eager to discuss fairer compensation models, it's hard to see any other conclusion than that the RIAA is a very, very special interest group indeed.

There's more. Suburban pub-rock 'punks' Green Day recorded a version of I Fought The Law And The Law Won for the occasion, to provide a soundtrack for the pigopolist lobby group.

And how reputations crumble.

Twenty years ago, let's not forget, Apple used a Superbowl TV intermission to introduce its iconographic Macintosh computer with the image of an athlete smashing Big Brother. The easy-to-use computer proved to be a liberating tool for personal creativity and with Adobe's Postscript and Aldus' software, created the desktop publishing industry. Now the same Apple is endeavoring to reduce personal freedoms by ushering in a regime where the recording industry enforces copyright with Big Brother's iron fist.

The exercise will be lost on the children of Apple founder Steve Jobs, however. He wisely doesn't allow his

kids to watch TV, or drink sickly sodas, advocating Odwalla's excellent fruit juices instead. Do as he does, not as he says, we suggest.

For more coherent models - which make nonsense of such corporate child-abuse - we suggest you check out the mathematics here. ®

## 67. GROSS NEGLIGENCE

There are stories floating around the net that the FCC has not made the matching payments due to candidates running for President. This effectively puts them out of the media market before the elections, and of course, mutes any criticism of the President.

Since the administration is duty bound to uphold the law and enforce it, particularly in areas where it disagrees with it, this is a troubling rumor. Neither of these complaints come from a front runner. The President, along with Kerry and Dean, have all decided to forgo matching funds so that they will not be encumbered by spending limits.

I suppose the FCC could be too busy looking at Janet's boob, or it could be that the guy running the show is a boob.

You decide.

Part of my disgust comes from doing my taxes today. Remember that Child Tax Credit? They couldn't make it any more difficult to understand, unless it was written in latin.

The worksheet to fill out the necessary single line on form 1040 was a 16 page download. And, to confirm the amount already received I have to go to the government's website and enter in my social security number. Let's hope the terrorists don't know how to use a computer. Weren't we convicting people for supplying valid social security numbers for false ID's recently?

And then there is the worksheet itself. Here are some gems from it:

*Use this worksheet only if you were sent here from the Line 13 worksheet on page 6 of this publication or line 4 of Form 8812.*

Is the amount on line 6 more than the amount on line 7?

No. Leave line 8 blank. Enter 0 on line 9.

Yes. Subtract line 7 from line 6.

If the result is not a multiple of \$1000, increase it to the next multiple of \$1000.

What do you do if the numbers match? Select YESNO

*Is the amount on line 1 of the Child Tax Credit Worksheet on page 4 \$3000 or more?*

NO. If line 4 is zero, STOP. Do not complete the rest of this worksheet. Instead, go back to Child Tax Credit Worksheet on page 5 and do the following. Enter the amount on line 12 on line 13 and complete line 14 and 15. If line 4 above is more than zero, leaves lines 6 through 9 blank, enter 0 on line 10, and go to line 11 on the next page.

Yes. If line 4 above is equal to more than line 1 above, leave lines 6 through 9 blank, enter 0 on line 10, and go to line 11 on the next page. Otherwise, see 1040 Filers and 1040A Filers on page 7 and then go to line

6.

Caution. Use this worksheet only if you answered YES on line 13 of the Child Tax Credit Worksheet on page 5.

This is an example of nested commands in programming. To create a system of pouring cash out of the federal treasury, while the debt grows, is both fiscally irresponsible and really stupid when done in such a manner. How hard is it to give money away? Really? Why do we waste our time putting so many numbers on a sheet of paper? Our system of taxation is antiquated.

How come Rush Limbaugh doesn't take dollar bills and fold them up into the shape of an AIDS ribbon anymore? Is he no longer a fiscal deficit sympathizer? He was always quick to mock others, but that was really funny when he did it. We have too many people in this country who present themselves as patriots, when in reality they are just partisan. This is true of both the left and the right.

I love Bush. He proves how foolish our tax system really is. If we can do bold stupid plans, maybe we can try other bold plans too. One thing is sure, money no longer has any value associated with it at all.

There is only one step after gross negligence.

JUBILEE. Start over, and try again.

If it was good enough for Robert Morris and the President's brother when he headed the Silverado Savings and Loan, then it should be good enough for everybody else too.

## 68. ANOTHER CRAZY SCREENPRINTER

Having been around the screeprinting industry since I was 5 years old and putting covers on glass jars on a Saturday morning, I often joke that it is both a disease, and that anything stupid that goes on can be explained by the noxious fumes that get inhaled over an extended period of time.

Well, today I discovered via e-mail what may well be the future of America radio, and democracy. This is a site put up by a t-shirt printer and self-appointed guru. (Something I am familiar with.)

<http://www.t-rad.com> <http://www.t-rad.com> T-Rad radio is for screen printers, but I suspect that the only trade secret you will discover is that we are all nuts. Oh, and there are a lot of moonlighting musicians crafting original music, that you will never find at Wal-Mart with an RIAA label on it.

There was a time in America when we had both slaves and apprentices. We abandoned both in the name of “freedom,” and instead chose a system of relentless competition. T-Shirts were thought to be a fad, that would soon expire. Instead, they took over the screenprinting industry and is the world’s most dominate form of advertising.

There is something going on, but I don’t know what it is. The first t-shirt I ever printed was IMPEACH NIXON, and that was in high school art class. (That was back in the days when we were scared of communists in Vietnam. Funny how there is always something to be afraid of. What if Johnny doesn’t get paid for playing his guitar?) Imagine if whole industries cooperate, rather than compete, like they did in the old days of apprenticeships. What a dramatically better world it could be.

The sucess of Apple and iTunes is based on cooperation both within and between industries. What screws it up is the competition and the privileges of patent and copyright protection.

Anyway, go hear some new music. And decide for yourself if I am right about the noxious fumes.

## 69. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH (BY THE BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD)

*There's something happening here  
 What it is ain't exactly clear  
 There's a man with a gun over there  
 Telling me I got to beware  
 I think it's time we stop, children, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down  
 There's battle lines being drawn*

### **Nobody's right if everybody's wrong**

*Young people speaking their minds  
 Getting so much resistance from behind  
 I think it's time we stop, hey, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down  
 What a field-day for the heat  
 A thousand people in the street  
 Singing songs and carrying signs  
**Mostly say, hooray for our side**  
 It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down*

### **Paranoia strikes deep**

#### **Into your life it will creep**

#### **It starts when you're always afraid**

*You step out of line, the man come and take you away  
 We better stop, hey, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down  
 Stop, hey, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down  
 Stop, now, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down  
 Stop, children, what's that sound  
 Everybody look what's going down*

## 70. WHO TO VOTE FOR?

I think Kucinich has the vision, Clark the ability to forge a consensus, and Kerry the experience to implement it.

They are all weak and strong. It is like the chicken and the egg problem. You can't implement any vision without consensus, but you can't get consensus without a vision.

I think the future of our democracy depends less on who we choose, and more on what they do after they lose. If they keep campaigning for a democratic victory, and accept defeat with grace, then the democrats will win in November. If they divorce themselves from the body politic (like the greens) and go home and nurse their wounded pride, then Bush will win. In that regard, their actions reflect us. If we demand a perfect candidate, and reject the strength that a candidate offers, then for the lack of perfection the good will be always left wanting.

I would also add that this same grace needs to be granted to the opposite party. Sites like [www.townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com) feast perpetually on partisan hate. Books like *Treason* and *Deliver Us From Evil* equate a political choice with an immoral choice. And my friend John Farr does the same with a throwaway line like "George Bush can go to hell (and surely will, anyway)," he is just less long-winded about it.

In the commerce of politics, there is an assumption that everyone is replaceable and expendable, when in fact it should be the opposite: No one is dispensable, including those who we disagree with. The defeat or victory in an election is just a part of a messy process. It is neither a final judgement nor a vindication. In many ways, it is the low point of our politics, rather than its high point. Only then do we hear the constant drumbeat of fear, and the accusation of guilt by innuendo. (Willy Horton) Partisanship robs us all of honor. We cannot attack the honor of somebody else without damaging our own in the process.

The President has had his chance to demonstrate his ability to forge consensus. By all measures, it is a miserable failure. He has even divided our allies, the one area where he had the freest hand to promote his vision. He sees the world as divided, and reaps what he sows. And so do those on the left who attack his honor. A political choice cannot be a moral judgement. That is the slippery slope that the experiment to separate church and state was meant to remove.

So now we must all choose. But the question, as I see it, is, which progressive is the least regressive? Can the Chicken and the Egg meet in the middle of the road?

What are your thoughts? Which vote is wisest?

# 71. OSAMA BIN LADEN'S LETTER TO AMERICA

Introduced by Steve Consilvio

Regarding this letter, any bold text was added by me. I discovered that this complaint existed in late October 2003. I had been writing for quite a while here at mymac, and had been puzzling through our circumstances, specifically in regard to Osama bin Laden. Osama's line of thinking follows that of conservative Christians and my economic theories.

I was told about this letter at another forum, and downloaded it from the Guardian Newspaper in England. This is not hate mail. It should be seen as the historical equivalent to our Declaration of Independence (1776) having been written well after the Boston Tea Party. (1773)

There are, to be sure, lots of logic errors, but they are the same complaints that conservative Christians make, so they should be familiar. That logic I tried to expose in my essay, Life, Death, and Dixie Chicks. My other essay, from Slavery to Utopia discusses the idea of a society without interest. Just like a conservative Christian, Osama is correct on the moral substance of his view, but is completely wrong on the political choice to use force and violence to express it.

As the campaign season starts to heat up, the national debate should be on the issues brought up in this letter. If we are to be one nation united, then we should be discussing our enemy and not each other. The path to peace is through the understanding of our enemy, so we can find a common ground, and a way to live together in peace and harmony. As our relationship with England shows, the sooner we can forgive each other and move on the better.

**What Osama fails to understand is that the corporations and all of our society, and even all of history, is the enslavement by The Interest Mechanism. He sees the cause, but does not understand the effect.**

## Osama Bin Laden's Letter to America

Sunday November 24, 2002

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

~Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged and surely, Allah is Able to give them (believers) victory~[Quran 22:39]

~Those who believe, fight in the Cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of Taghut (anything worshipped other than Allah e.g. Satan). So fight you against the friends of Satan; ever feeble is indeed the plot of Satan.~[Quran 4:76]

Some American writers have published articles under the title ~On what basis are we fighting?~ These articles have generated a number of responses, some of which adhered to the truth and were based on

Islamic Law, and others which have not. Here we wanted to outline the truth - as an explanation and warning - hoping for Allah's reward, seeking success and support from Him.

**While seeking Allah's help, we form our reply based on two questions directed at the Americans:**

**(Q1) Why are we fighting and opposing you?**

**Q2) What are we calling you to, and what do we want from you?**

As for the first question: Why are we fighting and opposing you? The answer is very simple:

(1) Because you attacked us and continue to attack us.

a) You attacked us in Palestine:

(i) Palestine, which has sunk under military occupation for more than 80 years. The British handed over Palestine, with your help and your support, to the Jews, who have occupied it for more than 50 years; years overflowing with oppression, tyranny, crimes, killing, expulsion, destruction and devastation. The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you are the leaders of its criminals. And of course there is no need to explain and prove the degree of American support for Israel. **The creation of Israel is a crime which must be erased.** Each and every person whose hands have become polluted in the contribution towards this crime must pay its price, and pay for it heavily.

(ii) It brings us both laughter and tears to see that you have not yet tired of repeating your fabricated lies that the Jews have a historical right to Palestine, as it was promised to them in the Torah. Anyone who disputes with them on this alleged fact is accused of anti-semitism. This is one of the most fallacious, widely-circulated fabrications in history. The people of Palestine are pure Arabs and original Semites. It is the Muslims who are the inheritors of Moses (peace be upon him) and the inheritors of the real Torah that has not been changed. Muslims believe in all of the Prophets, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all. If the followers of Moses have been promised a right to Palestine in the Torah, then the Muslims are the most worthy nation of this.

When the Muslims conquered Palestine and drove out the Romans, Palestine and Jerusalem returned to Islaam, the religion of all the Prophets peace be upon them. Therefore, the call to a historical right to Palestine cannot be raised against the Islamic Ummah that believes in all the Prophets of Allah (peace and blessings be upon them) - and we make no distinction between them.

(iii) The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally revenged. You must know that the Palestinians do not cry alone; their women are not widowed alone; their sons are not orphaned alone.

**You attacked us in Somalia; you supported the Russian atrocities against us in Chechnya, the Indian oppression against us in Kashmir, and the Jewish aggression against us in Lebanon.**

**(c) Under your supervision, consent and orders, the governments of our countries which act as your agents, attack us on a daily basis;**

- (i) These governments prevent our people from establishing the Islamic Shariah, using violence and lies to do so.
  - (ii) These governments give us a taste of humiliation, and places us in a large prison of fear and subdual.
  - (iii) These governments steal our Ummah's wealth and sell them to you at a paltry price.
  - (iv) These governments have surrendered to the Jews, and handed them most of Palestine, acknowledging the existence of their state over the dismembered limbs of their own people.
  - (v) The removal of these governments is an obligation upon us, and a necessary step to free the Ummah, to make the Shariah the supreme law and to regain Palestine. And our fight against these governments is not separate from our fight against you.
  - (d) You steal our wealth and oil at paltry prices because of your international influence and military threats. This theft is indeed the biggest theft ever witnessed by mankind in the history of the world.
  - (e) Your forces occupy our countries; you spread your military bases throughout them; you corrupt our lands, and you besiege our sanctities, to protect the security of the Jews and to ensure the continuity of your pillage of our treasures.
  - (f) You have starved the Muslims of Iraq, where children die every day. It is a wonder that more than 1.5 million Iraqi children have died as a result of your sanctions, and you did not show concern. Yet when 3000 of your people died, the entire world rises and has not yet sat down.
  - (g) You have supported the Jews in their idea that Jerusalem is their eternal capital, and agreed to move your embassy there. With your help and under your protection, the Israelis are planning to destroy the Al-Aqsa mosque. Under the protection of your weapons, Sharon entered the Al-Aqsa mosque, to pollute it as a preparation to capture and destroy it.
- (2) These tragedies and calamities are only a few examples of your oppression and aggression against us. It is commanded by our religion and intellect that the oppressed have a right to return the aggression. Do not await anything from us but Jihad, resistance and revenge. Is it in any way rational to expect that after America has attacked us for more than half a century, that we will then leave her to live in security and peace?!!

**(3) You may then dispute that all the above does not justify aggression against civilians, for crimes they did not commit and offenses in which they did not partake:**

**(a) This argument contradicts your continuous repetition that America is the land of freedom, and its leaders in this world. Therefore, the American people are the ones who choose their government**

**by way of their own free will; a choice which stems from their agreement to its policies. Thus the American people have chosen, consented to, and affirmed their support for the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, the occupation and usurpation of their land, and its continuous killing, torture, punishment and expulsion of the Palestinians. The American people have the ability and choice to refuse the policies of their Government and even to change it if they want.**

(b) The American people are the ones who pay the taxes which fund the planes that bomb us in Afghanistan, the tanks that strike and destroy our homes in Palestine, the armies which occupy our lands in the Arabian Gulf, and the fleets which ensure the blockade of Iraq. These tax dollars are given to Israel for it to continue to attack us and penetrate our lands. So the American people are the ones who fund the attacks against us, and they are the ones who oversee the expenditure of these monies in the way they wish, through their elected candidates.

(c) Also the American army is part of the American people. It is this very same people who are shamelessly helping the Jews fight against us.

(d) The American people are the ones who employ both their men and their women in the American Forces which attack us.

(e) This is why the American people cannot be not innocent of all the crimes committed by the Americans and Jews against us.

(f) Allah, the Almighty, legislated the permission and the option to take revenge. Thus, if we are attacked, then we have the right to attack back. Whoever has destroyed our villages and towns, then we have the right to destroy their villages and towns. Whoever has stolen our wealth, then we have the right to destroy their economy. And whoever has killed our civilians, then we have the right to kill theirs.

The American Government and press still refuses to answer the question:

**Why did they attack us in New York and Washington?**

**If Sharon is a man of peace in the eyes of Bush, then we are also men of peace!!! America does not understand the language of manners and principles, so we are addressing it using the language it understands.**

**(Q2) As for the second question that we want to answer: What are we calling you to, and what do we want from you?**

**(1) The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam.**

(a) The religion of the Unification of God; of freedom from associating partners with Him, and rejection of this; of complete love of Him, the Exalted; of complete submission to His Laws; and of the discarding of all the opinions, orders, theories and religions which contradict with the religion He sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam is the religion of all the prophets, and makes no distinction

between them - peace be upon them all.

It is to this religion that we call you; the seal of all the previous religions. It is the religion of Unification of God, sincerity, the best of manners, righteousness, mercy, honour, purity, and piety. It is the religion of showing kindness to others, establishing justice between them, granting them their rights, and defending the oppressed and the persecuted. It is the religion of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil with the hand, tongue and heart. It is the religion of Jihad in the way of Allah so that Allah's Word and religion reign Supreme. And it is the religion of unity and agreement on the obedience to Allah, and total equality between all people, without regarding their colour, sex, or language.

(b) It is the religion whose book - the Quran - will remain preserved and unchanged, after the other Divine books and messages have been changed. The Quran is the miracle until the Day of Judgment. Allah has challenged anyone to bring a book like the Quran or even ten verses like it.

(2) The second thing we call you to, is to stop your oppression, lies, immorality and debauchery that has spread among you.

**(a) We call you to be a people of manners, principles, honour, and purity; to reject the immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gambling's, and trading with interest.**

We call you to all of this that you may be freed from that which you have become caught up in; that you may be freed from the deceptive lies that you are a great nation, that your leaders spread amongst you to conceal from you the despicable state to which you have reached.

(b) It is saddening to tell you that you are the worst civilization witnessed by the history of mankind:

(i) You are the nation who, rather than ruling by the Shariah of Allah in its Constitution and Laws, choose to invent your own laws as you will and desire. You separate religion from your policies, contradicting the pure nature which affirms Absolute Authority to the Lord and your Creator. You flee from the embarrassing question posed to you: How is it possible for Allah the Almighty to create His creation, grant them power over all the creatures and land, grant them all the amenities of life, and then deny them that which they are most in need of: knowledge of the laws which govern their lives?

**(ii) You are the nation that permits Usury, which has been forbidden by all the religions. Yet you build your economy and investments on Usury.** As a result of this, in all its different forms and guises, the Jews have taken control of your economy, through which they have then taken control of your media, and now control all aspects of your life making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense; **precisely what Benjamin Franklin warned you against.**

(iii) You are a nation that permits the production, trading and usage of intoxicants. You also permit drugs, and only forbid the trade of them, even though your nation is the largest consumer of them.

(iv) You are a nation that permits acts of immorality, and you consider them to be pillars of personal freedom. You have continued to sink down this abyss from level to level until incest has spread amongst

you, in the face of which neither your sense of honour nor your laws object.

Who can forget your President Clinton's immoral acts committed in the official Oval office? After that you did not even bring him to account, other than that he 'made a mistake', after which everything passed with no punishment. Is there a worse kind of event for which your name will go down in history and remembered by nations?

**(v) You are a nation that permits gambling in its all forms. The companies practice this as well, resulting in the investments becoming active and the criminals becoming rich.**

(vi) You are a nation that exploits women like consumer products or advertising tools calling upon customers to purchase them. You use women to serve passengers, visitors, and strangers to increase your profit margins. You then rant that you support the liberation of women.

(vii) You are a nation that practices the trade of sex in all its forms, directly and indirectly. Giant corporations and establishments are established on this, under the name of art, entertainment, tourism and freedom, and other deceptive names you attribute to it.

(viii) And because of all this, you have been described in history as a nation that spreads diseases that were unknown to man in the past. Go ahead and boast to the nations of man, that you brought them AIDS as a Satanic American Invention.

**(xi) You have destroyed nature with your industrial waste and gases more than any other nation in history. Despite this, you refuse to sign the Kyoto agreement so that you can secure the profit of your greedy companies and\*industries.**

(x) Your law is the law of the rich and wealthy people, who hold sway in their political parties, and fund their election campaigns with their gifts. Behind them stand the Jews, who control your policies, media and economy.

(xi) That which you are singled out for in the history of mankind, is that you have used your force to destroy mankind more than any other nation in history; not to defend principles and values, but to hasten to secure your interests and profits. You who dropped a nuclear bomb on Japan, even though Japan was ready to negotiate an end to the war. How many acts of oppression, tyranny and injustice have you carried out, O callers to freedom?

(xii) Let us not forget one of your major characteristics: your duality in both manners and values; your hypocrisy in manners and principles. All\*manners, principles and values have two scales: one for you and one for the others.

(a)The freedom and democracy that you call to is for yourselves and for white race only; as for the rest of the world, you impose upon them your monstrous, destructive policies and Governments, which you call the 'American friends'. Yet you prevent them from establishing democracies. When the Islamic party in Algeria wanted to practice democracy and they won the election, you unleashed your agents in the Algerian

army onto them, and to attack them with tanks and guns, to imprison them and torture them - a new lesson from the 'American book of democracy'!!!

(b)Your policy on prohibiting and forcibly removing weapons of mass destruction to ensure world peace: it only applies to those countries which you do not permit to possess such weapons. As for the countries you consent to, such as Israel, then they are allowed to keep and use such weapons to defend their security. Anyone else who you suspect might be manufacturing or keeping these kinds of weapons, you call them criminals and you take military action against them.

(c)You are the last ones to respect the resolutions and policies of International Law, yet you claim to want to selectively punish anyone else who does the same. Israel has for more than 50 years been pushing UN resolutions and rules against the wall with the full support of America.

(d)As for the war criminals which you censure and form criminal courts for - you shamelessly ask that your own are granted immunity!! However, history will not forget the war crimes that you committed against the Muslims and the rest of the world; those you have killed in Japan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon and Iraq will remain a shame that you will never be able to escape. It will suffice to remind you of your latest war crimes in Afghanistan, in which densely populated innocent civilian villages were destroyed, bombs were dropped on mosques causing the roof of the mosque to come crashing down on the heads of the Muslims praying inside. You are the ones who broke the agreement with the Mujahideen when they left Qunduz, bombing them in Jangi fort, and killing more than 1,000 of your prisoners through suffocation and thirst. Allah alone knows how many people have died by torture at the hands of you and your agents. Your planes remain in the Afghan skies, looking for anyone remotely suspicious.

(e)You have claimed to be the vanguards of Human Rights, and your Ministry of Foreign affairs issues annual reports containing statistics of those countries that violate any Human Rights. However, all these things vanished when the Mujahideen hit you, and you then implemented the methods of the same documented governments that you used to curse. In America, you captured thousands the Muslims and Arabs, took them into custody with neither reason, court trial, nor even disclosing their names. You issued newer, harsher laws.

What happens in Guatanamo is a historical embarrassment to America and its values, and it screams into your faces - you hypocrites, "What is the value of your signature on any agreement or treaty?"

**(3) What we call you to thirdly is to take an honest stance with yourselves - and I doubt you will do so - to discover that you are a nation without principles or manners, and that the values and principles to you are something which you merely demand from others, not that which you yourself must adhere to.**

(4) We also advise you to stop supporting Israel, and to end your support of the Indians in Kashmir, the Russians against the Chechens and to also cease supporting the Manila Government against the Muslims in Southern Philippines.

(5) We also advise you to pack your luggage and get out of our lands. We desire for your goodness,

guidance, and righteousness, so do not force us to send you back as cargo in coffins.

(6) Sixthly, we call upon you to end your support of the corrupt leaders in our countries. Do not interfere in our politics and method of education. Leave us alone, or else expect us in New York and Washington.

**(7) We also call you to deal with us and interact with us on the basis of mutual interests and benefits, rather than the policies of sub dual, theft and occupation, and not to continue your policy of supporting the Jews because this will result in more disasters for you.**

If you fail to respond to all these conditions, then prepare for fight with the Islamic Nation. The Nation of Monotheism, that puts complete trust on Allah and fears none other than Him. The Nation which is addressed by its Quran with the words: ~Do you fear them? Allah has more right that you should fear Him if you are believers. Fight against them so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of believing people. And remove the anger of their (believers') hearts. Allah accepts the repentance of whom He wills. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.~ [Quran9:13-1]

The Nation of honour and respect:

~But honour, power and glory belong to Allah, and to His Messenger (Muhammad- peace be upon him) and to the believers.~ [Quran 63:8]

~So do not become weak (against your enemy), nor be sad, and you will be~superior ( in victory )if you are indeed (true) believers~ [Quran 3:139]

The Nation of Martyrdom; the Nation that desires death more than you desire life:

~Think not of those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive with their Lord, and they are being provided for. They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them from His bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice in a grace and a bounty from Allah, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.~[Quran 3:169-171]

The Nation of victory and success that Allah has promised:

~It is He Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad peace be upon him) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam), to make it victorious over all other religions even though the Polytheists hate it.~ [Quran 61:9]

~Allah has decreed that 'Verily it is I and My Messengers who shall be victorious.' Verily Allah is All-Powerful, All-Mighty.~ [Quran 58:21]

The Islamic Nation that was able to dismiss and destroy the previous evil Empires like yourself; the Nation that rejects your attacks, wishes to remove your evils, and is prepared to fight you. You are well aware that the Islamic Nation, from the very core of its soul, despises your haughtiness and arrogance.

If the Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were humiliated by the hands of the Mujahideen, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace. If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy.

This is our message to the Americans, as an answer to theirs. Do they now know why we fight them and over which form of ignorance, by the permission of Allah, we shall be victorious?

# PROLOGUE

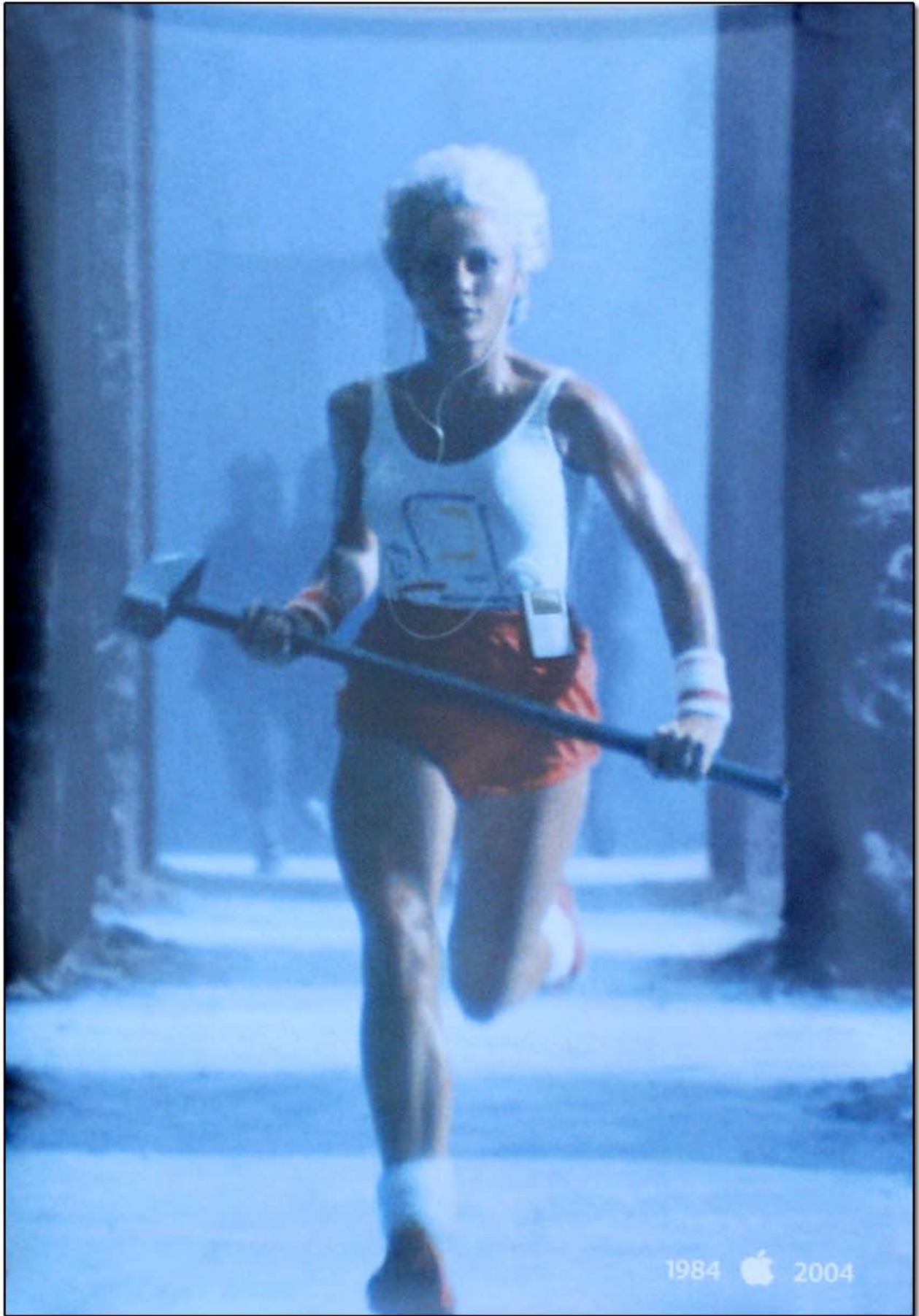
Stupid? No my intellectually obscure friend, you are not stupid. You exist in the wonderful sphere of such expansive brilliance that the vast majority of the world can only hold their collective breaths in rapt amazement. The problem, dear brother, is trying to explain your thesis to the general population. I am afraid it won't work. Those who brave the new frontiers must often suffer pain and death until the realization of their vision is grasped by those who follow trembling.

-post by an anonymous reader

Can't we skip the pain and death and trembling part and get on with it?

-Steve

*The end.*



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