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Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter With Kansas?* A Book Review

Pierre Islam '05

As any astute student of American history can tell you, the Democratic party used to be the “little guy’s” party, standing tall for the interests of organized labor and the working poor. According to this rubric, one would expect Kansas, populated by diligent small farmers and hardworking blue-collar workers, to be one of the most Democratic states in the nation. Yet Kansas, and other “heartland” states like it, strongly supported Bush and are staunchly Republican, despite the fact that the Republican Party’s entrenched corporate interests are antithetical to those of the laborers who constitute these states. This puzzling conundrum is what Thomas Frank attempts to decipher in *What's The Matter With Kansas?* Utilizing incisive, witty prose and poignant examples drawn from personal experience, Frank demonstrates how the Republican party has slyly blinded blue-collar workers to their own economic demise by promising cultural change while actually delivering capitalist exploitation. Masking their true intentions with appeals to the Bible and the “common man,” the richest businessmen on Earth have convinced the proletariat that it is the effete, parasitic “liberal elite” who control the nation and oppress the common people, rather than the robber-barons themselves. Frank also levies at least part of the blame for this sad state of affairs on Democrats and other liberals, however, pointing out that the Democratic Party has neglected the needs of blue-collar workers in their zeal to acquire socially liberal white-collar workers, repulsing many Kansans and leaving them easy targets for the Republican party’s advances. Being a native Kansan himself, Frank writes compassionately and sympathetically on the plight of his native state, making

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Russia Under Putin: The Road to Authoritarianism

Chrissy Lundquist '06

Vladimir V. Putin was first elected President of Russia on March 26, 2000. From the very beginning, he has moved his country away from democratic reform. His steps toward authoritarianism are clear: control of the media, nationalization of private industry, crackdown on political opposition, and centralization of government. The reasons for his policies are less clear, although poor economic conditions, the continuing war in Chechnya, terrorism, and the desire of the Russian people for a sense of nationalism all play a role.

Perhaps the biggest threat to a democratic society is the placing of restraints on the media; a suppression of the media is a suppression of ideas. A free and open society requires a medium in which ideas can be expressed without fear of reprisals. It is in this regard that Putin has inflicted the most harm to the development of a democracy. By increasing state control of the media and dominating state-run television, Putin effectively foreclosed the use of the media by other candidates in the recent election. To justify his actions, he replied that “the media is an instrument,” not an institution (Kaminsky). Apparently, it is no longer an “instrument” of democratic reform.

Another sign of Putin’s move toward authoritarianism is his nationalization of private industry. He recently halted the break-up of the government-owned electricity monopoly, UES. In addition, he announced his intention to increase the state’s majority stock in the natural gas giant, Gazprom (Aron). Putin justified the moves toward nationalization of industry by criticizing Russian dependence on “a club of overseas creditors” (the West) (Rabinbach). These actions follow the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, founder of the oil giant, Yukos, on charges of fraud and tax evasion, although the prosecution of the politically

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Women's Status in the "New Iraq": Better or Worse?

Jessica Asrat '05

Have your parents ever said to you, "this family is not a democracy"? With regard to my own familial structure, this means that my older sister and I do not have a voice in where we travel over summer vacation. One must understand that I am not trying to sound superficial or narcissistic; I am only pointing out the type of issues that I find extremely important within my own family. But this instance could quite possibly be one of the least harmful examples of undemocratic social structure. More extreme examples of oppressive familial and public social structures are abundant in Iraq. Under Saddam Hussein, many Iraqis lived in constant fear for their lives. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, it is disputable that life, in general, has improved considerably. Yet, in many cases, life for women has remained equally frightening. The U.S. struggles to give Iraqi women certain inalienable rights, such as political efficacy and economic opportunity. Simultaneously, however, the personal security and status of Iraqi women in both the familial and public spheres have declined. The United States attempts to implement a democratic government, but the newly conservative social structure is quite undemocratic with regard to women; it has become so inequitable that females in Iraq still feel the need to worry for their lives. This time, however, the threat is not from a distant dictator, but from those who buy groceries at the same supermarket and, most disturbingly, those who share the same blood.

Prior to the American invasion of Iraq, the Baath regime was in effect under Saddam Hussein. Iraqi citizens who were not members of the Baath political party and therefore not open supporters of the regime "couldn't get anything (St. Petersburg Times)." The economy was fully geared towards the prosperity of Baath members, so much so that children were forced to leave school in order to help relieve the poverty that consumed so many families.

Material comfort, however, was not the only concern for non-Baath members. Saddam Hussein killed many while he was in power and many Iraqis lived in constant fear for their lives. Subsequent to a 1991 uprising in Kirkuk, for example, a woman named Falih fled her home with her family. Their car managed to evade the helicopter that followed it, but it was further waylaid at a roadblock. Falih watched as her sister, aunt, and stepmother were all killed. She and her father both were shot, twice and three times

respectively. Falih, her father, and her younger brother escaped to another city where they hid for eleven years, in constant fear that the government would locate them. Another Iraqi in hiding speaks for many about the American entrance into Iraq: "We named this war as a liberation... But the American people named it an invasion. It was the greatest invasion ever (St. Petersburg Times)."

Subsequent to the U.S. invasion, the American government established a goal with regard to Iraqi women: to give women greater political efficacy, increased access to education, and more economic opportunity. A January 2004 fact sheet from the State Department's Office of International Women's Issues points out many of the initiatives that have spawned from this goal. Most notable are the efforts of the United States to broaden the political, economic, and educational opportunities of women. In 2003, the Bush administration allocated a total of \$21.2 billion dollars towards the restoration of Iraq's infrastructure, democracy building, economic development, employment, and medical and educational needs. This allocation was made with the full understanding that money would be put towards the equal participation of women. Political workshops have been setup for women, in addition to women's centers. The U.S. has also focused on training women for the occupational world, vaccinating children and pregnant women, and renovating schools. A total of 30 million vaccines have been administered, 1,993 schools have been renovated, 5 million books printed and distributed, and 10, 100 Schools in a Box fully furnished with classroom equipment have been established. The United States is making a concerted effort to improve life for Iraqi women (Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc.).

With respect to increased political activism, the efforts of the U.S. have not been in vain. In March 2004, Iraqi women demonstrated freely for the first time in Iraq's history. The basic rights of women were inscribed into law in March, and in a celebration of their newly established freedom of speech, 200 women marched across Baghdad in an effort to gain expanded rights, all the while chanting: "Yes, Yes for equality, Yes, Yes for freedom (Agence France-Presse)." A primary goal of U.S. policy was to establish greater political efficacy for women, and this goal is seemingly on its way to being achieved (Agence France-Presse).

This being true, however, women have also lost a great deal of social freedom since the American invasion. Despite Saddam Hussein's tyranny, women under his regime were granted the most basic legal protections in the Muslim world. The Iraqi civil code under Hussein prohibited marriage



The Crisis in America's Public Schools

Hanna Gisel '06

This year's presidential debates have revolved around international events involving the War on Terrorism and the war in Iraq; while homeland issues (with the exception of security) have taken second place. The placement of the internal problems that afflict this country on the back burner of the national agenda is troubling because in states such as Oregon, "budget cuts, federal underfunding, and a nationally orchestrated anti-tax crusade, have left public schools facing the worst funding crisis in decades"¹. The problems that undermine America's public schools will further multiply if our political leaders continue to neglect or mismanage the failing schools. As cliché as it sounds, the students of today *are* the leaders of tomorrow, and if the public school system continues to travel in this downward spiral, "tomorrow" will be an extremely grim time.

The disastrous state of Oregon's public schools serves as the perfect example of the growing crisis of public schools around the country. Not only are Oregon's schools imploding, its economy is in shambles, destroyed by recession and budget cuts, resulting in the unraveling of state services. In January 2003, the state legislature proposed a temporary half-percent income-tax rate increase to help relieve a growing budget deficit. When the voters opposed the proposal, almost 100 schools districts, nearly half in the state, had to end the school year early. In Hillsboro, Oregon, schools ended after only 159 days of school, even though the mandatory minimum is 180 days. In August of 2003, the legislature passed an \$800 million package of temporary income and other tax increase, and allotted \$300 million for education. This tax would have cost a family with the state's median income of \$45,000 per year only \$36. However, before the tax could be instituted, a national conservative group brought its anti-tax crusade to Oregon. This national conservative group, Citizens for a Sound Economy, came to Oregon days after the bill's passage and began fighting for the repeal of the tax package. This campaign cost CSE nearly \$500 million. Their money paid off on February 3, 2004, when Oregonians voted 59-to-41 percent to repeal the tax package. This repeal forced the state to cut another \$500 million of public spending, and \$300 million in cuts came from the schools.²

The \$300 million worth of cuts from the public schools in Oregon have left schools systems, such as

Hillsboro School System, in desperation. The Hillsboro officials promised not to end the school year early after the early closure in 2003, so they had to find other ways to cut their spending. They decided to reduce the number of teachers and the number and variety of classes, and to take money away from extracurricular activities. Hillsboro eliminated more than 200 teaching positions, and now all sport teams are "pay-to-play". Students must pay \$175 per sport; some sports, such as golf, swimming, and tennis, are now "club" activities. Elementary school band funding was cut and staffing for physical education classes and music has been reduced by half. The education officials fired both librarians in Hillsboro High School and eliminated all guidance positions, leaving two counselors to advise 700 students each. The student teacher ratio has increased by 20% and class size on average is 35 to 45 students. According to the statistics from the National Education Association, school spending per student dropped more in Oregon than in any other state, placing Oregon at 31st in the nation in kindergarten through high school spending. Charlie Cleveland, a 26-year teaching veteran, girl's lacrosse coach, and teacher at Hillsboro High, believes that the cuts on extracurricular activities, the increase in class size, and the reduction of electives offered, have undermined his relationships with his students. According to Cleveland, clubs, such as his previous Model UN Club, that were eliminated because of the expenditure cuts, provided an environment outside the classroom where teachers and students made valuable connections. The teachers are not

the only ones upset over the severe cuts in Oregon's schools; many students, such as Craig Dobbs, a Hillsboro High student council member, feel neglected and frustrated as a result of the reductions. Dobbs, 18, expressed his frustration and summarized the problem when he said, "You can't learn... Some people just give up. With 46 people in class, you can't concentrate on someone who is slipping through the cracks. If they are talking about cutting school days, the teacher can't slow down."³

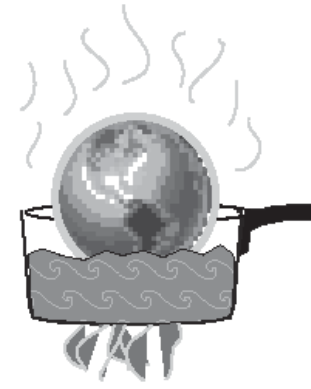
Oregon is only one of the many states forced to cut educational expenses. National budget crises have forced spending reductions in almost every state. Nineteen states have reduced K-12 expenditures in the last two years; and nationally the rate of growth of educational spending has dropped to its lowest point since the recession of 1990-91. These cuts have left public school systems across the country in destitution. In California, districts have fired 3,800 teachers and 9,000 school employees, reduced textbook purchases, summer school availability, bus routes, maintenance, athletics, school newspapers, and electives. In Kansas, half of the school districts have reduced the staff, some now have 4-day weeks, and 50



Global Warming and Rising Seas

Tatiana Robinson '06

Global warming is a very hot topic these days (pun fully intended) and recently the conversation is becoming even more heated. It seems that not a day goes by without some startling new claim about the ill effects of global warming, greenhouse gases or dramatic climate shifts and the accompanying catastrophic, no, cataclysmic consequences for the planet Earth and all its inhabitants. It's hard to make sense out of all the claims, counterclaims and big news stories that bombard us with a confusing array of facts and opinions. Just ask yourself - Is global warming a scientific issue or a political issue? Is it a real concern or just a bunch of hot air? Are the seas rising or is my beach house sinking? You may say there is room for debate but my research indicates there is only one answer and we better get busy fixing the problem or begin devoting more resources to space exploration and colonization.



Global warming is not a new concept. Scientists have discussed the 'greenhouse effect' since the late 1800's. The 'greenhouse effect' refers to the natural phenomenon that keeps the Earth in a temperature range that allows life to flourish! The enormous energy from the sun warms the Earth's surface and atmosphere. As the energy radiates back toward space as heat, a portion is absorbed by a delicate balance of heat trapping gases in the atmosphere that creates an insulating layer.

Naturally occurring greenhouse gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (NO₂) and ozone (O₃). Without these naturally occurring gases in our atmosphere, the Earth's average temperature would be 0 EF instead of the comfortable 59 EF -60 EF range that it is today. However, too much CO₂ can produce an inferno. Venus has a dense atmosphere which consists mainly of CO₂. As a result, the greenhouse effect is stronger and the surface temperature is a scorching 900 EF. Even though only a small amount of greenhouse gases are present in the Earth's atmosphere (CO₂, for example, makes up about 0.03% of the atmosphere), they have a powerful effect on temperature. 'Global warming' refers to

the rise in the earth's temperature, resulting from an increase in heat trapping gases in the atmosphere.

The most comprehensive and authoritative source of scientific data on global warming is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In 1988 the United Nations Programme and the World Meteorological Organization set up the IPCC to examine the most current scientific information on global warming and climate change. More than 2,500 of the world's leading climate scientists, economists, and risk experts contributed to the Panel's most recent report, Climate Change 2001: The Third Assessment Report. Scientists from about 100 countries were involved in a thorough review of published and peer-reviewed literature to assess what is known about the global climate, why and how it changes, what it will mean for people and the environment, and what can be done about it. The IPCC concluded, "An increasing body of observations gives a collective picture of a warming world and other changes in the climate system".¹ The kinds of changes already observed are:

Climatic Changes¹

- Increase in global average surface temperature of about 1EF in the 20th century
- Decrease of snow cover and sea ice extent and the retreat of mountain glaciers in the latter half of the 20th century
- Rise in global average sea level and the increase in ocean water temperatures
- Likely increase in average precipitation over the middle and high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. And over tropical land areas
- Increase in the frequency of extreme precipitation events in some regions of the world

Physical and Ecological Changes¹

- Thawing of permafrost
- Lengthening of the growing season in middle and high latitudes
- Poleward and upward shift of the planet and animal ranges
- Decline of some plant and animal species
- Earlier flowering of trees
- Earlier emergence of insects
- Earlier egg-laying in birds

Global mean surface temperatures have increased 0.5 EF - 1.0 EF since the late 19th Century. The 20th Century's 10 warmest years all occurred in the last 15 years of the century/ Of these, 1988 was the warmest year on record/ The snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere and floating ice in the

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Gay Marriage: An Issue of Rights

Jon Medeiros '05

The issue of gay marriage is, simply put, quite difficult to write about. To discuss whether or not homosexuals should have the right to marry, it is perhaps best if we first define just what the purpose of the government is. Certain people claim that the purpose of our government is to serve the will of the people, and often this is true. A number of arguments agreeing or disagreeing with this statement could be used. The problem with these arguments is that they are based on opinion and people inevitably disagree. Thus it is fair to conclude that the best way to define the purpose of our government is to go to the source of our government: the constitution. The goal of our founding fathers, according to the preamble, was to "to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty." Nowhere in the preamble does it mention that popular opinion should dictate legislation.

Popular opinion, while somewhat informative in regards to trends, is a poor indicator of what is right. So goes the old adage; what is popular isn't always right, and what is right isn't always popular. As well worn as the saying is, it often proves to be true. At certain times in our history popular opinion has been in favor of slavery, both African-Americans and women not having the right to vote, poll taxes, and numerous other injustices that we today would find absurd. It would be hypocritical to use popular opinion to justify banning gay marriage without changing back the previously mentioned injustices, as they too once represented the will of the people.

There are two major questions raised by the issue of gay marriage. The first is whether the question of gay marriage is best left to the state or to the federal government. The second, and far more important, question is whether or not the government, on any level, has any business barring homosexuals from marrying. In order to restrict rights for a group of people the government must prove, without a doubt, that by allowing group A to have certain rights, group B is directly hurt. In this case the government must prove that by giving gays equal relationship recognition, straight people, and the country as a whole, is hurt. President Bush has failed to prove this, instead he has proposed banning gay marriage on the grounds that gay marriage would harm the "sanctity of marriage." The "sanctity of

marriage" is somewhat of a vague claim, and accordingly, it will be difficult to define, and therefore difficult to discuss. Liberals make the argument that the President has brought the issue up in order to harm John Kerry politically. To keep as much opinion out of this as possible, let us trust President Bush and assume that the president is telling the truth.

Since I have always been a fan of political discussion, gay marriage is something I bring up a lot. I have routinely challenged any conservative, or liberal for that matter, against gay marriage to come up with a good reason to deny homosexuals equal rights. Yes, equal rights. Since we are discussing the issue lets call things as they are. What we are doing, after all, is denying homosexuals the right to marry whom they please. If you can come up with a good reason to deny someone their rights then that is fine, but you might as well be honest about what you are doing. Most of the arguments I have encountered seem to fall in one of the three following categories:

- 1) The religious argument.
- 2) The "logical extension" argument.
- 3) The "marriage is an institution" argument.

Do you want to be remembered as the generation that refused to grant homosexuals equal rights?

Before I discuss these arguments individually it is important to make clear a number of points. First I am to the left, somewhere around Ralph Nader, and thus I am completely for gay marriage. While I am for gay marriage, I do not view this as a partisan issue. Equality should never be a partisan issue. Since the government has declared that everyone should have equal rights, it is the burden of those opposing gay marriage to prove why they are correct

and those supporting gay marriage are wrong. If a person came up to me tomorrow and could accurately explain how society would be hurt by giving homosexuals equal rights I would change my view. this has yet to happen.

Since the homosexual marriage debate is essentially about equal rights, the states should not be deciding on gay marriage. The decision to protect homosexuals' rights must come from the national government and be uniform across the country. it would not make constitutional sense to grant homosexuals the right to marry in, say, Nevada, but not in California. All states are required by the government to treat every person with equal regard. Gay marriage falls into that category unless the national government can properly explain how giving gays their right to marry directly hurts society. According to John Kerry the decision is best left to states, as no state is required to recognize a marriage in another state. The flaw in Kerry's plan is that there are a number of benefits

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Is there a future for Oil?

Amelia Kermis '07

Slowly the car bumped through the turn onto the one and a half lane Haul Road leading to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. The road cuts through some of the most pristine tundra of Alaska, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), home to herds of caribou, arctic fox, and clouds of mosquitoes. It is a narrow washboard of a road, raised twenty feet above the ground so that the friction of car and oil tanker traffic will not melt the surrounding tundra.

Paralleling this bumpy road is another scar upon the landscape, the Alaskan Pipeline. While many pipelines travel underground, this huge pipeline lies above ground because of the tundra's permafrost. The pipeline is raised on metal pilings with huge heat reducing baffles to lessen the potential for harming the permafrost. Because of the danger of earthquakes in this seismically active land, the supports are set on pistons to allow movement and prevent oil spills on the delicate surrounding ecology. It is also raised to allow the movement of huge herds of migratory caribou.

<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/3540849/>

The Alaskan Pipeline

This beautiful region of Alaska is in danger from the pipeline itself, and its risk of terrorism or rupture. It may be further destroyed by the increasingly desperate search for oil because under the permafrost is oil just waiting to be siphoned away.

Technology is becoming more advanced and oil hungry, causing the number of barrels required per year to rise exponentially. So far new oil fields have been discovered enabling production to equal need. This "peak" (the term *peak* describes the state when oil will still be found but will no longer meet demand) is estimated to be reached sometime around 2035. Some researchers suggest that the peak may be reached even sooner, perhaps by 2020, since now China and India have become more technically dependent and therefore require more oil supplies (Los Angeles Times).

Crude oil reserves are "the estimated quantities which geological and engineering data demonstrate with reasonable certainty can be recovered in future years from known reservoirs (EIS)" But, these known reserves are becoming harder and harder to find, forcing oil companies to drill the bottom of the ocean and convince countries to allow them to desecrate their protected oil holding land. Even old sources are running dry, for example the lower 48 states in the United States is producing less than half the barrels of oil they used to in 1970 (Appenzeller).

Once existing oil fields no longer can fill the need, wild life preserves like the ANWR in Alaska, under whose ground lie vast oil reserves, will be sacrificed for the pressing need for fuel.

If the tundra of Alaska and other pristine wildernesses are to be saved from destruction as humanity becomes more and more desperate for oil, efforts have to be directed toward the creation of alternative fuel sources. Examples of known alternative fuel sources are solar power, nuclear power, wind power, hydropower, and the creation of synthetic oils. These all harness renewable resources that are readily available, often in unlimited quantities. All that is needed to instate these alternative fuel sources is more research to make their use cost effective and safe.

United States citizens are spoiled by cheap oil. Gasoline taxes average 43 cents per gallon here as opposed to a dollar or more in Europe and Japan (Appenzeller). Since taxes on gas are less in our country Americans can afford to drive cars or even SUV's that get 10 to 12 miles per hour, instead of taking or building public transportation. Americans, could help push back the time when the oil will run out by walking, riding a bike, car pooling, or driving hybrid cars. The government could do the unthinkable -

raise taxes on gas - not to raise more money for the state but to ensure that oil supplies last longer allowing more time for finding alternative energy sources.

This change in American philosophy toward fuel use can be accomplished by lobbying state and federal legislatures to do two things: preserve the wilderness and encourage the

use of alternative fuels. Only in this way will the

beauty of wild places, such as the Alaskan tundra, be kept safe for future generations.

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This beautiful region of Alaska is in danger from the pipeline itself...it may be further destroyed by the increasingly desperate search for oil.



The Political Power of Oil

Paul Salamon '06

The world has entered into a new era of competition where countries are in a constant struggle to obtain the unrenowable resource of oil. Modern industrial countries such as the United States who are dependent on constant flows of cheap oil for the growth and prosperity of their economies are constantly scrambling to accommodate their growing need for oil by seeking new ways to obtain it. The growth of nations and the world population has created an increasing demand for resources such as oil. In the future when such a resource is scarce it could be a "harbinger of war" (Powershift). The depletion of oil could lead to serious implications and cause havoc in oil-driven economies and international politics. Countries in the Middle East who produce and supply much of the world's crude oil hold extremely powerful positions in world politics. They control another country's economy indirectly through their production and supply of crude oil. In decades to come, the depletion of oil will intensify as a serious issue because countries will fight and go to war over oil. The United States has been on a thirty year campaign in the Persian Gulf to obtain a military presence to further extend their interests and shift their global dominance. Their key policy is controlling oil, which has emerged as the most powerful tool in world politics and influence.

The United States is searching for new ways to obtain constant and reliable means of oil. It has been an issue that's gone back decades in American history. During World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt, made an agreement with Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud to protect the royal family against its enemies. The United States received access to Saudi oil in return (Oil and Politics). Since the 1970s, the United States has been building up its military force in the Gulf by creating military partnerships, building bases and selling weaponry. The Gulf region is slowly emerging as the center of power in the world because of its vast oil reserves. Which ever country has the most influence over that region will become the dominating country. Since Jimmy Carter's Presidency to the present day administration, the US has had interests and influence over the Gulf region. Through the Carter Doctrine, the United States created the Rapid Deployment Force, a "military unit capable of rushing several thousand US troops to the Gulf in a crisis" (Mother Jones). It was obvious at this point that the United States was on a quest to protect it's vital interests in the Gulf. In the 1980's, during Ronald Reagan's Presidency, the US once again aided in protecting the oil tankers during the war between Iran and

In decades to come, the depletion of oil will intensify as a serious issue because countries will fight and go to war over oil.

Iraq. The Central Command was also created to specifically direct US military authority for the Gulf region. The United States supplied Middle Eastern countries with military weapons and aided Afghanistan during its war against the Soviet Union. The United States made sure that the Soviet Union would not have a firm presence in the Gulf region and over oil supplies. During the Gulf War in the early 1990s, the United States maintained a substantial military presence to suppress Saddam Hussein's influence on Middle Eastern oil reserves. The US led war in Iraq is almost the final piece of the American presence in this region. It is most likely according to Robert Kagan, a strategist and "war hawk" on Iraq, that the US will keep military bases in Iraq. He also believes that "when we have economic problems, it's been caused by disruptions in our oil supply. If we have a force in Iraq, there will be no disruption in oil supplies" (Mother Jones). The Persian Gulf is a strategic point because the two countries of Saudi Arabia and Iraq contain the supplies for "nearly one out of every three barrels of oil" (Mother Jones) in the world.

The key US policy is controlling resources such as oil. Some Washington foreign-policy strategists believe that the United States has to seize control of the Gulf region and its oil in order for them to achieve global dominance. A professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College, Michael Klare points out that "controlling Iraq is about oil as power, rather than oil as fuel". Professor Klare believes that "control over the Persian Gulf translates into control over Europe, Japan, and China" (Mother Jones). Many strategists believe that the current administrations decision to go to war with Iraq was just one part of a large puzzle in the United States' policy on controlling oil and world domination.

Demand for oil has increased around the world. With the growth of new industrial nations such as India and China, the demand for more barrels of oil is rising. The United States imports around 55-60 percent of the oil it uses and much of comes from Middle Eastern countries (Oil Statistics). The US is trying to reduce its dependence on Middle Eastern oil by forming new contracts with Mexico, Russia and African countries. At present, the price of oil has dramatically increased to around \$55 dollars a barrel partly because of recent hurricanes that have damaged oil production in the Gulf of Mexico, the War in Iraq, as well as political problems in Venezuela and a strike in Nigeria and the rising consumption of oil from China (BBC), even though OPEC countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have agreed to increase productions of oil.

The United States has kept a "special relationship" with the Middle Eastern country of Saudi Arabia. Through this agreement, the United States must guarantee the security of Saudi Arabia, and in return, Saudi Arabia will

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Aquatic Genocide

Adrian Pijoan '07

Fishing is one of the world's largest industries. Not only do many people rely on fish for their main income, but fish account for the main source of protein for one fifth of the human race. In fact, the demand for fish has doubled in the last thirty years. This seems like a good thing—lots of people gaining income off of a very high demand for a product. The problems start when you realize that fish are not merely products that can be built, they are living creatures, and are being killed off faster than they can reproduce. Much faster. A report issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), stated that nearly 70% of fish species have been over-fished to the point of full exploitation or depletion. A recent study claimed that 82 species of fish are in risk of extinction. The Pacific Islands represent the last healthy fisheries, but these are now being quickly depleted as well.

There have been attempts to stop the rampant over fishing by creating laws that, while helpful, are often not enforced. Laws restricting net size and limitations on catch size and equipment. Fishermen however still need to bring in enough money to sustain themselves, often looking for loopholes in the laws or ignoring the laws altogether. These laws have led to nothing more than an increase in pirate fishing—fishing without a permit. Another attempt called for the creation of Marine Protected Areas to help conserve fish. While this may be a nice idea, less than one percent of the ocean is “protected.”

Another helpful idea came via fish farming. If we need to stop catching so many fish, why not just grow them instead? While seemingly a grand idea, in the end fish farming causes more harm than benefit. Just raising fish is difficult and inefficient enough. Because fish are natural cannibals, it takes 2.4 pounds of fish to produce a single pound of farmed salmon. The farmers buy cheap fish, mush it up, turn it into pellets, and then feed it to the salmon. Where does this fish come from? Why the ocean of course! Add to this the fact that many of these pellets are not eaten, and simply lie on the ocean floor beneath the pens along with the excrement of thousands of fish living in a very



small area. On top of this layer, there is a film made of pollutants from antibiotics and pesticides used in fish farming. These antibiotics also create populations of disease resistant salmon who escape their poorly designed pens, invade the local environment, and kill off existing populations and causing all sorts of instabilities in the ecology. They're not even really fish. These salmon are practically artificial, being fed dye to give their flesh a nice pink color. If they weren't, their meat would be gray.

Reports state that with the next twenty years, the price of most foods will decline, while the price of fish will continue to rise steadily. On other words, fish becoming a rarer and rarer commodity daily. This decimation of the ocean is largely ignored, and if nothing is done, you can look

forward to a future in which there will be no fish. Beyond removing a vital part of world economy and one of the main food items and source protein in the world, the devastation of fish destroys long standing ecological balances.

While over-fishing is the main cause for the deprivation of the seas, other factors such as

destruction of habitats, marine and agricultural pollution, development, and other factors. Recreational fishing, while not nearly as damaging as commercial fishing, contributed to a problem that is quickly becoming irreversible.

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The Menace of Consumerism to American Children

Rachael Kernis '08

“Mommy, please!!!!!!” followed by wailing is the sound that rings through many stores. It is also a cry that many adults have worked hard to make happen – the sound of children’s whining for something they wanted because they had seen it on television. This sound costs American advertising companies roughly 2 billion dollars a year to produce (www.globalissues.org....).

Today’s children have a culture that depends on, and is almost identical to the adult consumer culture, so much so that parents have to buy their children whatever the culture demands or else their children become outcasts and do not fit in with others their age (www.globalissues.org....).

The consumerism that is directed at children today is having undesired effects on children’s health. Advertisers try to supply children with desired goods by enticing them to eat excessive amounts of candy or to buy countless bottles of sugared soda. One British chocolate company bribed children to eat their product by giving them a prize if they collected a certain number of wrappers. The company told children that if they collected tokens from 5,440 bars of chocolate, they would get a set of posts and a net for volleyball. This meant that each group of children would have to spend roughly \$3,500, eating around 1.25 million calories, which is approximately two million kilos of fat, in order to “win” their sporting equipment. A child could “win” a basketball with tokens from 170 bars of



chocolate, which would take a 10-year-old child 90 hours of play to burn off (www.globalissues.org....). It makes one wonder who is the real winner in this situation.

Children are being exposed to computers and media at younger and younger ages, despite the recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics that children younger than 5 years of age should not be exposed to any visual media. Many researchers say that children are being desensitized to sex and violence by today’s movies, video games, and music. In a report by the Federal Trade Commission in 2000, it was discovered that 80% of “restricted” films were targeted towards children under 17. Another discovery was that music containing “explicit-content” labels was targeted toward children through extensive advertising (www.media-awareness.ca....). Alcohol marketers strongly target radio stations and magazines aimed at youth with advertising for beer and

malt alternatives (Research Institute on Alcoholism). Games such as Duke Nukem, Time Crisis, and Quake are exposing today’s children to extreme violence. Images such as dismembered bodies, women

In today’s society, it has become increasingly difficult to raise children with a strong moral base because many people are busy with their jobs and rely on television as a babysitter.

being raped, and children killing or being killed fill their content.

Today’s American children will see roughly 40,000 dramatized murders before they are 18 years old (www.media-awareness.ca....). Saturday morning cartoons, which heavily market product, have long been implicated in exposing children to violence and bullying.

The effects of consumerism are a very real threat to the health, safety and values of American children. In today’s society, it has become increasingly difficult to raise children with a strong moral base because many people are busy with their jobs and rely on television as a babysitter. In many cases, however, this “babysitter” does not share the parents’ values and may, in fact, expose their children to harmful ideas and images. The same could be said of music and video games that may keep children occupied, but at considerable psychic cost.

While it is difficult and time consuming to do so, one solution is to have parents watch programs, listen to music or play video games with their children. This allows them to talk about what they have seen or heard. Teachable moments, and parents who are available to teach their message, may be the strongest antidote to the effects of the culture of consumerism on American children.

Winning Back America: A Review of Howard Dean's *You Have the Power: How to Take Back Our Country and Restore Democracy in America*

By Jane Arcadi '05

Although he did not win the Democratic presidential nomination, Howard Dean has set the Democrats on the right track for winning the White House back. In his book, he discusses how the Democrats have lost their power to the extreme right wingers. Dean shares his insights, which he learned on the campaign trail, about how the Democrats can regain their power and restore democracy in America. Former Governor of Vermont, the second smallest state in the country, he started campaigning for president with no name recognition, no campaign infrastructure, no press team, no advisors, and no support from his party. Despite these disadvantages, Dean quickly gathered much support. Dean humorously writes that after he spoke in California, supporters walked away crying because they were able to touch Dean's \$125 JCPenny suit. Through the innovative use of the Internet and a system of "house meetings," Dean became a powerful candidate in the primary elections. His campaign was funded by small donations from millions of ordinary Americans. A woman in a wheelchair saved money from her disability check and gave Dean fifty dollars in quarters. Dean comments that this was "the emergence of a *real* grassroots political movement. It was the start of something *very new*. . . a campaign by, of, and for the people." (20) Dean's anger at the Bush administration may have fueled the start of his campaign, but it was the ordinary people who kept his campaign alive.

Howard Dean explains his "anger." This anger started in 1991 when the Democratic House leaders refused to help the National Governors Association pass a health-care reform bill. These Democrats were so afraid of losing their careers that they did not make any moves that might be "unpopular." Dean writes:

They were paralyzed between their fear of losing an election and their fear of change. In the end they lost and became the victims, in 1994, of the most sweeping

congressional changes in sixty-two years. They set the table for Newt Gingrich.

It was an awful irony: After decades of domination by the so-called party of the people, the party of FDR and Harry Truman, America continued, at the turn of the millennium, to be the only country in the industrialized world that didn't have health insurance for all its people. The Democrats, who by the early 1990s had been in power in Congress without

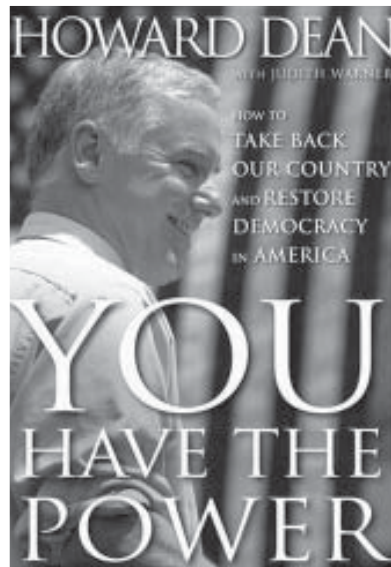
interruption for forty years, became so obsessed with keeping their seats and staving off challenges that they forgot why

they were there. They lost sight of their mission to help the middle class maintain its standard of living and became obsessed

with maintenance of their own political careers. (63)

He states very clearly that the Democrats were cowards, afraid to stand up to the republicans. In the midterm elections of 1994, the republicans had a majority in both the house and senate, and had gained eleven new governorships. Despite working with an extreme right wing Congress Bill Clinton helped create a huge economic boom in the 1990s, making a \$3.1 trillion budget surplus. He expanded health-care coverage, and almost got an agreement signed between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Democrats did not understand that it was Clinton's personality that enabled him to accomplish what he did. Dean writes, "Instead of believing that reinventing some version of Bill Clinton can be our salvation, and grasping for a light that we can never reach, we should be getting back to winning elections the old-fashioned way: by listening and voters. That, in fact, was the Bill Clinton way." (78) In the 2000 election, however, Republican George W. Bush won the Presidency with "five hundred thousand fewer" (6) popular votes than Democrat Al Gore.

Dean, at first, approached Bush's presidency with an "open mind." (3) Dean considered himself in the "moderate middle" of the democratic party and even received support from a few moderate republicans. Bush claimed to be moderate and preached "Compassionate conservatism" while he campaigned. Dean states, "I was astounded, then, when Bush cast moderation and conservatism aside and took up the mantle of right-wing extremism." (4) Bush has tried to break up Social Security and Medicare programs. He even instated a bill called No Child Left Behind, which could possibly classify every public school in American as



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Islam cont'd

What's The Matter With Kansas? a timely, excellent read for anyone interested in comprehending the sometimes mind-boggling machinations of the American electorate.

It's important to note that the economic situation in the "heartland" states truly is dire. According to *The Nation*, "During the 2000 election we went to Texas and Tennessee to find some of the 11.6 million impoverished children—77 percent had at least one working parent, according to the Children's Defense Fund...During what was alleged the most booming economy in history, America's Second Harvest (a nationwide network of food banks) gave away double the food in 2000 they gave in 1990, but that still wasn't enough—many food banks ran empty."1 A heavy economic malaise seems to be suffocating these midwestern states, and yet people living in these states voted heavily for Bush and his corporation-friendly agenda.

Why do these red-staters vote for Republicans whose economic policy is driving them into destitution? Blame it on "The Great Backlash," which Frank describes in his introduction as "a style of conservatism that first came snarling onto the national stage in response to the partying and protests of the late sixties. While earlier forms of conservatism emphasized fiscal sobriety, the backlash mobilizes voters with explosive social issues—summoning public outrage over everything from busing to un-Christian art—which it then marries to pro-business economic policies...Backlash ensures that Republicans will continue to be returned to office even when their free-market miracles fail and their libertarian schemes don't deliver and their 'New Economy' collapses." (5) By taking advantage of their conservative views on social issues, Republicans have managed to blind blue-collar workers to the extent of their economic woes.

One of the most bizarre effects of the "Great Backlash" is the marriage of corporate interests with religious piety. Kansas is a deeply religious state, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that many of its politicians are devout Christians. What is surprising, however, is that many of these politicians serve big corporations with as much fervor as they serve Jesus. Frank illustrates of this odd state in Chapter 3, "God, meet Mammon." He points out Senator Sam Brownback, saying "Admirers of Saint Sam will tell you about his high-profile wars against human cloning and in support of persecuted Christians in third-world countries. They would also do well to examine the peculiar series of events that propelled Brownback into office back in 1993. At the time Brownback was laboring in

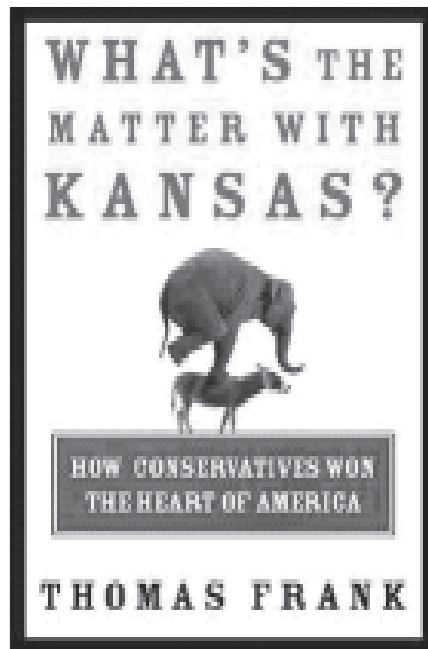
obscurity as Kansas secretary of agriculture...Brownback had been chosen for the post by the state's largest agricultural interests...for example, when he made limits on dangerous pesticides voluntary, Brownback was acting as a government regulator, but the kind of regulator conservatives approve of, the kind who answers to private industry instead of the public." (73) Brownback got elected to Congress due to the fact that his faith appealed to his constituency, but he demonstrates how many conservative politicians have used the Bible to mask the corporate interests they truly serve.

Another tactic the Right has used in enticing blue-collar workers is emphasizing the "foreignness" of liberals. Frank describes this strategy in chapter 1, "The Two Nations," pointing out that "The red-state/blue state divide also helped conservatives form one of their dearest rhetorical maneuvers, which we will call the *latte libel*: the suggestion that liberals are identifiable by their tastes and consumer preferences and that these preferences reveal the essential arrogance and foreignness of liberalism...it's the places that people live and the things that they eat, drink, and drive that are the critical factors." (16-17)

By portraying liberals as effete, ostentatious fops out of touch with the dilemma of hardworking laborers, conservatives have diverted attention away from hard issues of economics towards irrelevant distinctions of culinary tastes and automobile preferences.

Some would say this is only to be expected from a state like Kansas. It's regarded as the most "average" state in the Union, and even somewhat backwards. It would be easy to imagine a state populated by simpletons to blindly vote conservative no matter what. This view is dead wrong, however—a century ago, Kansas was one of the most progressive, liberal, and radical places in America, a fact that Chapter 2, "Deep in the Heart of Redness"

demonstrates. Frank provides a paragraph that furnishes the reader with an important lesson in American history: "Its periodic bouts of leftism were what really branded Kansas with the mark of the freak. Every part of the country had labor upheavals and protosocialist reform movements, of course. In Kansas, though, the radicals kept coming out on top. It was as though the blank landscape prompted dreams of a blank-slate society, a place where institutions might be remade as the human mind saw fit. In Crawford County the town of Girard was home to the *Appeal to Reason*, a socialist newspaper whose circulation was in the hundreds of thousands. In that same town, in 1908, Eugene



Lundquist cont'd

ambitious Khodorkovsky is seen by many as a crackdown on political dissidents under the guise of nationalizing private business.

In addition to controlling the media and nationalizing industry, Putin also suggests that a return to authoritarianism is underway by his efforts to centralize political authority. In a speech on September 13, 2004, Putin unveiled his plans for a "radically restructured" political system that effectively bolsters his power by ending the popular election of governors and independent lawmakers (Baker). Under this plan, Putin would appoint all governors, creating "a single chain of command." Russians will now vote only for political parties, not specific candidates, in parliamentary elections. This will ensure that "rogue candidates" will not appear on the ballot. Although the Kremlin responds to Western critics by noting that Americans do not have direct popular elections for their president either (Kaminsky), Russian political liberals, such as Sergei Mitrokhin, call it a "step toward dictatorship" (Baker). Veteran opposition leader Grigory Yavlinsky fears that now "the big decisions will be made by one man in one room" (Kaminsky).

One of the reasons Putin has been able to promote an authoritarian agenda is because he has delivered on his promise to the Russian people to strengthen the economy. In a recent national poll, 46% of Russians felt that the government's main goal should be strong economic growth; only 21% felt it was essential to rebuild a strong military. Russia's economic turnaround under Putin has been remarkable, due in part to Putin's practical experience in economics from his years as an aide to St. Petersburg's mayor, Anatoly Sobchak. Under Putin's leadership, the income tax was trimmed to 13%, and the sales tax was eliminated. He also tightened governmental spending; the number of federal agencies was pared from 30 to 17, and the federal workforce was cut by 20%. Since 1999, Russia's gross national product has grown by 38%, labor production is up by 50%, disposable income has doubled, the poverty rate has been lowered by one-third, and unemployment is down 19%. There are record budget surpluses, a strong ruble, lower inflation, and an improved debt rating (Aron).

A strong economy is expected to grow under Putin because of Russia's vast oil reserves. Russia has jumped from number 7 to number 2 in the world in the amount of oil reserves it possess, second only to Saudi Arabia (White). Putin is tapping into many wells that were either underdeveloped or untouched under previous regimes. Outdated machinery and old attitudes were responsible for sub-par oil production in the past. Journalist Gregory White states that underdeveloped and underused oil reserves



symbolized what was wrong with the Russian oil industry. The haphazard pumping by Soviet and then Russian concerns, as well as the lack of good technology that is relatively cheap and has long been standard in the US, put the Russian oil industry at a distinct disadvantage. Outdated attitudes also contributed to the underproduction of oil. "Under the Soviets, the five-year plan set targets for everything from crude oil output to how much water had to be pumped into the field. Beating the plan just meant that the bar was set higher the next time, while missed targets meant missed bonuses" (White). All of that is changing under Putin, who has removed many of the bureaucratic obstacles to oil production.

In addition to using the strong economy as a basis for exerting authoritarianism, Putin is also using the war in Chechnya, and its implications for the war on terrorism, to bolster his position. He portrayed his calls for a restructured government as necessary to strengthen the country in the face of terrorist threats from "those who inspire, organize and carry out terrorist acts seeking to bring about a disintegration of the country, to break up the state, to ruin Russia" (Baker). It is clear that the battle in Chechnya has taken on terrorist overtones, as

Chechen warlord and rebel leader, Shamel Basayev, has turned

a war of independence from Russia into an Islamic jihad, resulting in such atrocities as the massacre at the school in Beslan. "By donning Islamic garb, leaders... can open the door to foreign funds, particularly from wealthy Gulf states, and also to manpower from a pool of footloose militants looking for work" (Higgins, et al).

What is unclear is how

keeping a short leash on nearby political governors aids the war on terror. In fact, Putin gave no clear reasoning for how his political changes would fight terror, and instead talked in vague terms about banning extremist groups, promoting citizen informants, and creating a "Public Chamber" that would oversee security agencies (Baker).

In addition to an improved economy and a call to fight terrorism in Chechnya, Putin has also relied on the nationalism of the Russian people to further his agenda. Putin came to power when Russia was "a weak, humiliated ex-superpower that had lost its colonies, and was torn apart by chaos, corruption, social unrest and a lack of what the Russians called 'the national idea'" (Zabayev). Appealing to their national pride, Putin has tried to convince Russians that he is on their side and will restore national pride. A recent Putin speech took a strong nationalistic tone, stressing national pride and security. He invoked the words "country" and "Russia" more than 30 times, and blasted Western critics: "far from everyone in the world wants to see an independent, strong and confident

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below the age of 18, arbitrary divorce, and male favoritism in child custody and property inheritance disputes (The Washington Post). The Baath regime, for the most part, respected those rights. In late December 2003, the U.S.-backed Iraqi Governing Council voted to dissolve the established family laws entirely. In its stead, the Council proposed the imposition of strict Islamic doctrine known as Sharia (Washington Post). Iraqi women activists peacefully protested the imposition of the Sharia, on the basis that "the council's [sic] decision would set back their legal status by centuries (National Public Radio)." In spite of this exercise of women's political activism, the Sharia was approved by the Council by a narrow margin and was sponsored largely by the conservative Shiite members. Under Sharia, a woman's family could marry her off without her consent and regardless of her age, therefore overturning rights protected under Saddam Hussein. There are three women who were placed on the Governing Council by the United States. These women have remained silent on the issue of Sharia. There are several male members, however, who opposed the imposition of Sharia and called it "a threat to both civilized progress and national unity (National Public Radio)." The law was passed and, in consequence, Iraqi women lost a great deal of social freedom.

Since the invasion and the imposition of Sharia, security for women has decreased considerably. For many women, the tyranny of Saddam Hussein's regime has been replaced with growing religious conservatism and violence. As a result, there has been a rise in so-called honor killings. If a woman is suspected of having lost her virginity before marriage or taking part in an extramarital affair, the woman's male relatives may attempt to kill her in an effort to regain their honor. Even having been raped is considered an adequate reason for an honor killing. Under Hussein, the punishment for an honor killing was three years in prison. The police system, however, was sympathetic to many of these men and therefore it was unusual for a man convicted of an honor killing to be incarcerated for more than a few months. Since the U.S. invasion, the number of honor killings in Iraq has grown considerably. The number is not exact, but it is estimated to be in the hundreds. In neighboring Jordan, an "unenlightened" country, the average number of honor killings a year is 20 (Time).

In addition, the security of Iraqi women has decreased outside the home. A rise in female trafficking

(abduction and subsequent selling of women) has taken place since the U.S. invasion of Iraq—there are almost daily occurrences. No one knows who is responsible for the abductions of these women. The women are being trafficked both inside and outside the country. There are known cases where virgin girls have been sold to neighboring countries for \$200 and non-virgins for \$100. With respect to honor killings, marked women are considered sources of shame to men. In the case of trafficking, women are considered only as commercial commodities from which men can make a couple hundred dollars. This trafficking was not as prevalent under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Hussein had the trafficking and the honor killings under control. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, "women can no longer go out alone to work, or attend schools or universities. An armed male relative has to guard a woman if she wants to leave the house (The Guardian)." Paradoxically, as the sanctioned political activism of women has expanded under U.S. control, given new laws, the social status and basic security of women have declined considerably. Thus the increased political activism of women has been rendered relatively useless.

Saddam Hussein was a dictator. Under his tyranny, millions of people were killed and millions more lived in fear of their lives. The U.S. changed that; America entered Iraq in March 2003 and dissolved the tyranny. Yet, due to the imposition of Sharia, women have lost many fundamental rights regarding the family structure and the public sphere. The U.S., working closely with the Iraqi Council, is attempting to instill democratic values and processes in the country. The question that must be asked now is, what does this mean if one half of the Iraqi population is more oppressed than ever before?

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Since the invasion and imposition of Sharia, security for women has decreased considerably. For many women, the tyranny of Saddam's regime has been replaced with growing religious conservatism and violence.

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schools charge students to participate in extracurricular activities. In Buffalo, eight schools have closed and 600 teaching jobs were eliminated over the past three years.⁴ Many of the teachers lucky enough to have retained their positions are forced to work two or three jobs in addition to teaching because their low salaries, on average \$46,000 per year, don't provide enough to support their families. Steve Herraiz, a kindergarten teacher at John Muir Elementary School in San Francisco, works sixteen hours a week bartending and fifty hours a week teaching. He spent \$3,900 of his own money on classroom expenses, such as paper clips, art supplies, and paints; supplies that the district does not supply. By working two jobs, he was able to afford the extra materials he needed to be an effective teacher. For the last eight years Steve Herraiz has bought his students nutritious snacks that the school does not provide so his kindergarteners can get through the day. Rachel Cross, a single mom and History and Algebra teacher at Oneida Middle School in Oneida Tennessee, has to clean houses to support herself and her son. Dan Beautan, a fifth grade teacher in Phoenix, Arizona, barely stays afloat while working three jobs, one as a teacher, owning a landscaping company as a second, and delivering papers at 3:00 am. every morning. The problems in public schools are not isolated in one region or state; but trouble nearly every school district in America.⁵

As the quality of America's public schools decline, public school teachers are twice as likely as other parents to choose private education for their children. More than one-in-four public school teachers' children have abandoned the public school system in Washington, Baltimore, and sixteen other major cities. This trend exists nationwide. Public school teachers say private and religious schools "impose more discipline, achieve higher academic achievement, and offer overall a better atmosphere;". These teachers know the quality of a public school education better than anyone else; so it's no surprise that with the growing problems in the public school systems that more public school teachers favor a private education for their children.⁶

The major force behind the plunging of state budgets deeper into debt is the Bush tax cuts combined with his unfunded federal mandates, such as the No Child Left Behind Act.⁷ This law requires schools, teachers, and students to meet rising standards of performance, as measured by regular testing, or face federal sanctions. Critics of this law, which include many Democrats and teachers, believe the NCLB is underfunded and too reliant on testing. Others, such as unsuccessful candidate for democratic presidential nomination Howard Dean, criticize the law because it "delivers more paperwork, lower standards and higher property taxes, [and causes] state and local governments [to] scramble to comply with this unfunded federal mandate."⁸ Dean's statement alludes to a major criticism of the NCLB that it's an underfunded program.

Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, one of the original designers of the law, blames the president's budget's failure to recognize that the funding of public schools is equally important as the funding of the War on Terror for one of the reasons for the problems with the NCLB. School boards, such as the one in Reading, PA. sued the state and federal governments because it believed the NCLB created an "unfair economic burden". Cheshire, Conn. turned down \$80,000 in federal funding related to NCLB because its school board believed the bureaucracy and paperwork involved in dividing the students into racial and ethnic groups for testing wasn't worth it. The second major criticism of the law is that it forces teachers to "teach to the test"; otherwise the schools face serious consequences, possibly closure. Now, many subjects taught in schools are geared towards the tests; and since the tests focus on reading and math skills, other subjects, such as history and science, are sacrificed. The Republicans' and Bush's fear and abomination of taxes thwart the effort to improve the education system in the U.S. and cause public school systems around the country to continue to decline.⁹

National conservative groups, such as the Citizens for a Sound Economy, that led the fight for the repeal of the temporary tax increase in Oregon, also hinder public school improvement by leading a national anti-tax war. "The CSE describes itself as 'an army of activists' and as 'grassroots citizens dedicated to free markets and limited government'".¹⁰ However, the majority of its funding comes from large corporations and right-wing foundations, such as, General Electric, ExxonMobil, General Motors, Eli Lilly, Shell, and Unilever. During its fight for the repeal of the tax package in Oregon, the CSE also fought to defeat a tax increase in Alabama. The CSE succeeded and Alabama, 48th in the nation in per-student spending cut another \$54 million from school spending. The combined force of the federal government controlled by President Bush and national conservative groups, like the CSE, creates an enormous obstacle in the way of school improvement.¹¹

The crisis in our public schools will compound rapidly if the present method of action, predominantly neglect, continues. Our government and our president need to realize that the success of our nation's future depends as much, if not more, on the success of our nation's public schools as it does on our war against terror. Thousands of schools and millions of children will glide through our school systems unnoticed and uncared for until the people and our leaders realize the magnitude of the disaster plaguing America's public schools.

Endnotes

1. "Class Dismissed", David Goodman, Mother Jones: May/June 2004
2. "Class Dismissed", David Goodman, Mother Jones: May/June 2004
3. "Class Dismissed", David Goodman, Mother Jones: May/June 2004

Robinson cont'd

Arctic Ocean have decreased. Globally, sea level has risen 4-8 inches over the past century.³ A big enough rise of global temperatures would eventually melt the world's glaciers, and indeed a retreat of mountain glaciers since the 19th century is apparent in some regions. Beginning in the 1960's, several glacier experts warned that part of the Antarctic ice sheet seemed unstable. By the 1980's scientists realized that global warming would probably raise sea level enough to damage populous coastal regions.⁴

In the November 2004 issue of Scientific American, Richard B. Alley, Professor of Geosciences at Pennsylvania State University, discusses the inevitability of abrupt, drastic climate change. Professor Alley reveals the wealth of data contained in ice cores, extracted by scientists from Greenland's massive ice sheet in the early 1990's. These ice cores, some 3 kilometers long, are a remarkably clear set of records of the earth's climate spanning 110,000 years. The evidence has revealed a history of sharp fluctuation between climate—long deep freezes and brief warm spells.⁵

Precipitous climate changes of the past can be attributed to a single cause. "In each case, a gradual change in temperature or other physical condition pushed a key driver of climate toward an invisible threshold. At the point that threshold was crossed, the climate driver—and thus the climate as well—flipped to a new and different state and usually stayed there for a long time."⁵

Sharp warm-ups and cool-downs in one region may produce dramatically different consequences elsewhere even though they may share a common cause. Minor Ice Ages in the North coincide with cold, dry, windy conditions in Europe and anomalously warm weather in the South Atlantic and Antarctica. Floods and severe storms are accompanied by severe drought; the resulting effects on human populations could prove catastrophic. Scientists are concerned that they have not yet identified many of the thresholds that, when crossed, would lead to changes in regional climates. "we are replacing forests with croplands, which increases how much sunlight the land reflects; we are pumping water out of the ground, which changes how much water rivers carry to the oceans; and we are altering the quantities of trace gases and particulates in the atmosphere, which modifies the characteristics of clouds rainfalls and more."⁵

In Southern Africa, global warming threatens to deepen poverty. "The Working Group on Climate Change and Development, a coalition of environmental and aid agencies, noted that agricultural production, water supplies,

public health, and people's livelihoods were all being undermined by the effects of climate change."⁶ In a recent study the United Kingdom's Department for International Development warned that there could be an increase in the frequency of natural disasters in Southern Africa due to global warming. "In Greenland, the ice melt is speeding up. In 2001 NASA scientists published a major study based on observations by satellite and air craft. It concluded that the margins of the Greenland ice sheet were dropping in height at a rate roughly one meter a year."⁷ More icebergs

falling into the sea will cause two things to happen, a rise in sea level and the injection of cold fresh water that might disrupt ocean currents, including the Gulf Stream. In Southern Spain climatologist Dr. David Viner finds evidence that summers are longer and dryer, rains are heavier and shorter and he predicts the possibility of dramatic temperature increases based on a model prepared for a NATO conference on climate change.⁸ In Alaska, the Village of Shishmaref is being swallowed by the sea. Because temperatures in Alaska have increased over the last 30 years glaciers are starting to melt causing sea levels to rise and the permafrost is thawing. Professor Gunter Weller, director of the University of Alaska's Center for Global Change and Arctic System Research says several factors are at play. He says, "Shishmaref is an indication of what to expect in the

future in other parts of the world, in that respect it is the canary in the coal mine."⁹

Climate change transcends local and national boundaries. The New Economics Foundation, a coalition of aid and environmental groups, released a report calling on poor countries and rich nations to share in developing strategies for combating global warming.¹⁰ Other groups, including Oxfam, ActionAid, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and World Vision, contributed to the report Talk about heating up the debate on American non-participation; the Russian Duma recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol, a 1997 accord on global climate change. Over 120 countries have embraced the Kyoto Protocol that calls for a legally binding cap on CO2 emissions by a deadline of 2008-12.¹¹ The Kyoto Protocol does not solve the problem of global warming, but it is a first positive step in breaking the momentum of spiraling fossil-fuel consumption, particularly in the industrialized nations. On a global scale, the reduction of fossil-fuel emissions must be the foremost consideration of every modern society.

The World Wildlife Fund suggests that we, as individuals, can help to reduce greenhouse gases by:¹² ●●●●●●●●

Is global warming a scientific issue or a political issue? You may say there is room for debate, but my research indicates there is only one answer.

Medeiros cont'd

associated with marriage- joint tax returns, hospital visitation rights, wills, tax breaks, sick leave to care for husband/wife and about thirty others. Were this just about marriage Kerry's idea would be fine, but this is also a clear equal rights issue. If the decision was left up to the states there is the potential for lawsuits and more if one gay couple were to move to another state that failed to recognize their marriage. What would happen if a gay man's husband got sick on vacation? Allowing states to decide whether or not to recognize marriage between homosexuals creates more problems than it offers solutions. The first step in giving homosexuals equal rights is for the supreme court to declare DOMA unconstitutional. DOMA, the Defense Of Marriage Act, defines marriage as between a man and a woman and says that one state doesn't have to recognize another state's marriage. Obviously since marriage carries with it a plethora of benefits, DOMA discriminates against homosexuals on the basis of sexuality, something out of their control.

The first argument against gay marriage is the religious argument. People argue that God is opposed to homosexuals, and thus does not want them treated like everyone else. The major problem I have with this, as both a logical person and a Christian, is that it doesn't make sense for God to create people with a built in sin. According to most Christians God creates every living being. Keeping with our theme, let us accept this as true. What purpose would it serve for God to create people with an obvious inherit flaw (according to conservative Christians) such as homosexuality? Also one must ask how conservative Christians know that God doesn't like homosexuality? Even the most hardened Christian will acknowledge that the Bible was written by man and that men sin and are thus imperfect. Extending this to its logical conclusion, isn't it plausible that somewhere in one of the thousands of translations the Bible has gone through, a liberty or two was taken? Isn't it plausible that we really have little idea on how to interpret the Bible? Additionally if one analyzes Jesus' message, which we can likely agree is the center of Christianity, one will find a striking pattern of equality. Jesus, after all, hung out with all sorts of unsavory characters, such as Mary Magdalene, a prostitute. Jesus preached unpopular things, one of which was equality, and that everyone has an equal chance at an afterlife, regardless of gender or wealth. We know it is not fair to make the logical extension of this argument, that being that Jesus would have regarded homosexuals in the same light as heterosexuals?

Even if the religious argument has any merit, and considering the theme, lets say it does, there is one important aspect that the proponents of the religious argument fail to comprehend. Our government should have nothing to do with religion. Separation of church and state, it's all there right in the Constitution. Many people will argue that our country was founded on Christianity, and that while there

is a separation of church and state, Christian "morality" has always permeated our government. Anyone who chooses to grasp at these straws should take a look at the following quote:

"I do not find in our particular superstition of Christianity one redeeming feature.....Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burned, tortured, fined and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make half the world fools and half hypocrites; to support roguery and error all over the world." Thomas Jefferson said that. It is a fair claim to make that Thomas Jefferson had a central role in the early development of this country. While anecdotal evidence proves precious little, I think this quote shows us that even if Christianity may have played a role in our early government, a dislike of Christianity also played a role. It would not make sense to take what some may see as the Christian half of this equation without the other, less romantic, notion.

The second argument those against homosexual rights bring up is the "logical extension" argument. Many conservatives claim that if homosexuals are given the right to marry, then marriage must be taken to its logical extension. This, they claim, would include people marrying multiple people, animals, family members, inanimate objects (like toasters), or dead people, (like Adolph Hitler). At first this may seem like a valid argument. When each claim is broken down, however, the logical extension claim becomes murky at best and laughable at worst.

Polygamy, defined as the condition or practice of having more than one spouse at a time, is mostly associated with Mormons in Utah. Recently, however, polygamists have been striving to move away from being associated with Mormons, or religion at all. Polygamy, unlike gay marriage, does have an adverse effect on society. If men are allowed to have multiple wives, the value of single women goes up as fewer would be available for single men. The issue of divorce would open up a whole new can of worms. For example, would a woman be able to cite not receiving the same treatment as another of her husband's wives as a valid case for divorce? Many questions are raised and perhaps those questions are best answered in another paper. The main question that remains is whether or not it is possible to love more than one person equally, at the same time. This is a philosophical question and naturally people will have differing opinions. As someone who isn't even old enough to vote I really cannot speak much on the matter of love, much less on loving more than one person. Assuming it is possible for a man to love multiple women, one must ask whether or not the government can deny polygamists happiness in order to keep the value of women in society consistent? This question is a matter of opinion, as there is a valid claim that allowing polygamists to marry is somewhat detrimental to society. There are no real statistics on the

Salamon cont'd

cooperate with the United States' oil needs and keep a constant and reliable flow of oil into the international markets. The city of Riyadh, the largest exporter of oil in Saudi Arabia and in the world, provides the oil the United States needs. The United States has already shown its willingness to intervene militarily to protect Saudi Arabia. The Bush Administration did so in 1990 when they sent troops to Saudi Arabia after Kuwait was invaded by Iraq. But some are cautious over how long this relationship will last. After the September 11th attacks, the government has discovered that 15 of the hijackers were Saudi Nationalists. Commentators have also branded the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an "enemy" of the United States (Special Energy). Other reports have also shown that a percentage of each barrel of oil sold by the Saudi's goes to finance some sort of terror network.

Reducing our reliance on Saudi oil has to come with strong cooperation with other major oil producing countries. Russia has become a growing figure in the United States' quest to be less reliant on Middle Eastern oil. But Russia lacks new investment in oil production in the oil fields of Eastern Siberia, the Timon-Pechora region and the north Caspian Sea. The United States has been pressing Russia to reform its state oil monopoly and Russia's pipeline sector (Special Energy). The US is also trying to establish a presence among old Soviet Republics which possess large oil reserves. This new and emerging relationship between the "axis of oil" (US and Russia) is a way for the United States to have a stake in future Russian oil production, therefore, reducing its reliance on Saudi Arabia.

Iraq has also joined the United States' list of alternative oil suppliers. Some estimates believe that "Iraqi oil production could reach 6-7 million barrels per day by the end of the decade" (Special Energy). This would make Iraq the world's third largest exporter after Saudi Arabia and Russia. But this is pending security efforts by the US to protect the oil fields. Already new oil production efforts have been hindered by sabotage in Iraq.

The United States believes that our country's economic stability and prosperity is influenced by Persian Gulf oil. Therefore, the United States is on a quest to obtain and protect reliable sources of cheap oil. China's race for oil to fulfill its fast-growing needs is competition for the United States. The current Bush administration has obviously linked together its energy and military plans. The US policy is to secure more oil from the rest of the world" and "to enhance the capability to intervene" (Special Energy). The United States is not doing much to find ways to suppress the supposed energy crisis that could hit our country in decades to come. The federal government needs to start planning for future shortages of oil. We have to start early so that when those years do arrive, our economy will not be

overwhelmed and the United States will be in the position to depend on itself, rather than on another country.

The space race against the Soviet Union during Kennedy's Presidency was a major victory for America's global dominance. This was achieved by creating a government agency (NASA) that sponsored enormous science and technology programs. This led to new discoveries in the scientific field and the increase of millions of new jobs. The United States is now at a crossroads with China and Russia. These countries are seeking oil to feed their economies, but the key issue will be which country will become the dominating figure in global politics. To assure that the United States will sustain the position as number one in the international community throughout the next century, the United States must develop a comprehensive program which will assure the discovery and development of new energy sources such as hydrogen cells. The United States government is the only one that can provide the leadership and financial means needed to support such a program. This sort of government program could stimulate the development of science and technology, extend education, increase the amount of jobs and investment into new infrastructure. Not to mention further extend the United States' self-reliance on energy and political independence.

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Arcadi cont'd

a failed system within nine years. He granted tax cuts that over whelmingly benefited the wealthy millionaires. How could Bush claim to be so moderate yet act so extreme? As Dean puts it “once he’d (Bush) gotten into the Oval Office, he’d become so disconnected from ordinary people and the details of their lives that he’d let the Republican Party’s ideology get the better of him. He was missing the fine points of how that ideology affected ordinary people because he *just didn’t care about the details.*”(5) How could the Democrats let this happen? They, in fact, helped it. They voted to approve his so-called Medicare and educational “reforms”, his war resolution, and his tax cuts. Because of this Howard Dean became angry. When he spoke about his anger on the campaign trail he saw that many Americans felt the same way he did.

After receiving donations from ordinary citizens, Dean realized that he has changed their anger into hope. Instead of disbelieving in an incompetent administration, people started to have faith that change would come. Dean

After receiving donations from ordinary citizens, Dean realized that he had changed their anger into hope. People started to have faith that change would come.

writes, “We’d proved that people could be roused from their sense of powerlessness and reinfused with hope. Just as there was someone to listen to them.”(21) Along with a new philosophy and a new way to raise campaign money, Dean gives more advice to the Democrats on taking back the country.

Dean creates a “blueprint” for the rebirth of the Democratic Party. First of all Democrats have to look past November elections. They have to start thinking long-term and to start planning for what happens after this year’s election. Dean writes, “We need to build a forward-thinking, long-term presence in the states, in grassroots, organizations, in think tanks and foundations, on the Internet, and over the airwaves so that our own smart and honest *noise machine* can plug into the conversations going on in the American electorate.”(154) Dean really stresses using grassroots not just for raising money for local candidates but also for supporting and finding new local office holders. The “Dean for America” campaign was able to survive because it “ceded power to local folks and let them run things in their area as they saw fit.”(155) The

Democrats have to start treating these “local folks” as part of the campaign instead of the “target.”

Democrats have made the mistake of treating minorities as members of special-interest groups instead of individuals; “Special-interest groups comprise people who are trying to get something out of the government in return for payments or special legislation. African-Americans and Jews and Latinos and Asian-Americans and women aren’t special-interest groups.” (164) Also, Democrats have to take their message to the people they don’t usually talk to. If they never travel to conservative states such as Texas, Mississippi, and Utah, then those states will never hear the Democratic values. It’s very important to connect with voters because they are the ones who have the power.

Democrats need to think bigger. Dean writes, “They have to contest every seat, for every office, in every county of the United States.” (167) Even if a Democrat has no chance of winning an election, there still needs to be a Democratic candidate to spread the Democratic message. Democrats have got to “stop looking at congressional districts in which 70 percent of the population votes Republican as lost causes. We’ve got to reach out to the 30 percent who do vote for us and ask them to help us get out more of the Democratic vote.”(167) Over time that small 30 percent will continue to grow. Democrats must also develop party discipline. There needs to be unpleasant consequences for those who cross party lines and help the Republicans.

Dean has learned a lot during his campaign for President. If you have something to say, people will listen. In order to gain voters’ respect you must give them hope. His message to fellow Democrats is clear: Stay focused, stay organized, stay positive, and remember that *you* have the power!

Islam cont'd

Debs gave a fiery speech accepting the Socialist nomination for president; in 1912 Debs actually carried Crawford County, one of four he won nationwide. In 1910 Theodore Roosevelt signaled his own lurch to the left by traveling to Kansas and giving an inflammatory address in Osawatimie, the onetime home of John Brown.” (31-32)

Kansans were also enthusiastic supporters of the most famous of 19th century left-wing movement, Populism. “They took the state’s traditional Republican masters utterly by surprise in 1890...in the decade that followed, they elected Populist governors, Populist senators, Populist congressmen, Populist Supreme Court justices, Populist city councils, and probably Populist dogcatchers too.” (32-33)

During the nineteenth century, Populism was the screed of oppressed, downtrodden farmers feeling exploited by powerful robber-barons. How, then, did the party of the powerful manage to woo a state that so empathized with the weak? Frank solves this mystery in chapter 6, “Persecuted, Powerless, and Blind.” While portraying liberals as wealthy and powerful, conservatives portray themselves as

underdogs. Frank points out that “Conservatism is the doctrine of the oppressed majority...while liberals use their control of the airwaves, newspapers, and schools to persecute average Americans—to ridicule the pious, flatter the shiftless, and indoctrinate the kids with all sorts of permissive nonsense—the Republicans are the party of the disrespected, the downtrodden, the forgotten. They are always the underdog, always in rebellion against a haughty establishment, always rising up from below.” (119) It makes no difference that the wealthiest CEOs in America vote Republican—it’s the Democrats who are the nefarious overlords. By pretending to stand up for the “little guy,” Republicans have won his heart in Kansas and other heartland states like it.

Many liberal pundits describe the sorts of Republican ploys described above as race-baiting in disguise—conservatives just know how to surreptitiously play on white Middle America’s fear of blacks. Frank disputes this assertion in chapter 9, “Kansas Bleeds for Your Sins.” The author again uses the example of Senator Sam Brownback, pointing out “Brownback may be as far to the right as they come on most issues, but when it comes to courting minority voters, he is a man of almost Clintonesque ability. He has befriended the black caucus, mainly by supporting the construction of a national museum of African-American history, and he has also been honored by the National Council of La Raza for his staunch support of open immigration policies.” (181) Also extreme-right wing movements have often been associated with racism, Thomas Frank carefully points out how the conservative movement in Kansas is bereft of any anti-minority animus, making it appealing to moderate Kansans who might have otherwise been driven away.

The examples Frank has provided above prove how self-serving the politicians and corporate leaders promulgating the conservative backlash truly are. Yet somehow, Kansans seem to ignore their foibles—a marvel which the author points out in chapter 12, “Performing Indignation.” As Frank says, “Even as conservatives routinely mock Democrats for faking their religious sentiment, they themselves plainly feel so exempt from such criticism that they wander blithely in and out of the land of hypocrisy, never pausing to wonder if their followers might be paying attention. Laura Ingraham, a right-wing pundit renowned for appearing on the cover of the *New York Times* magazine in a sexy miniskirt ten years ago, today denounces Hollywood elites for wanting to tear down ‘traditional values...’ The careers of Newt Gingrich, Henry Hyde, Bob Barr, and Enid Waldholtz are all tainted by revelations of

foulest hypocrisy. And yet the suspicions of the rank and file are not aroused.” (235-236) Perhaps the most tragic aspect of Kansas’ political derangement is not that the most cherished beliefs and values of the common worker are being cynically exploited by politicians and right-wing pundits, but that he believes these self-serving scoundrels genuinely subscribe to the things they preach.

Despite the myriad ways the Republican party has slyly bamboozled blue-collar workers, the Democratic party shares much of the blame for sitting idly by and allowing it to happen. As Frank points out in the Epilogue, “By all rights the people in Wichita and Shawnee and Garden City should today be flocking to the party of Franklin Roosevelt, not deserting it. Culturally speaking, however, the option is

simply not available to them anymore. Democrats no longer speak to the people on the losing end of a free-market system that is becoming more brutal and arrogant by the day...Curiously enough, though, Democrats of the DLC variety aren’t worried. They seem to look forward to the day when their party really is what David Brooks and Ann Coulter claim it to be now: A coming-together of the rich and

self-righteous.” (243-244) Politically speaking, pandering to upper class white collar voters while abandoning their historic blue-collar base will prove suicidal for the Democrats. If the party of FDR wishes to retake this country from George W. Bush and his ilk, they had better remember the blue-collared shoulders they have historically relied on.

What’s The Matter With Kansas? provides an unorthodox look at the American political landscape that makes it an indispensable read during these troubled times. Thomas Frank takes a hard, unflinching look at the dismal economic realities all too many Americans face, and every concerned American should be aware of how blind many of his countrymen are to their blatant exploitation by the ruling party. Frank’s prose is eloquent and witty, and ironically enough, this presents a minor flaw for the book—as beautiful as the writing may be, it seems more suited for *Harper’s* magazine than for staunchly conservative blue-collar workers from Midwestern America, the kind of people who need to read this book more than anyone. All in all, Thomas Frank has done a wonderful job deconstructing one of America’s most puzzling political mysteries, and anyone interested in furthering their understanding of American political and economic dilemmas would do well to read this book.

(Footnotes)

1 Dale Maharidge. “Rust and Rage in the Heartland” *The Nation*, 20 September 2004, 13.

**Frank writes
compassionately and
sympathetically on the
plight of his native state,
making *What’s the
Matter with Kansas?* a
timely, excellent read.**

Lundquist cont'd

Russia. The strengthening of our statehood has intentionally been interpreted as authoritarianism” (Rabinbach).

Russia will be left to chart her own course under Putin since the leading candidate in the West to interfere, the United States, will be reluctant to do so. Both John Kerry and President Bush, in the recent presidential debates, named nuclear proliferation as the biggest concern the United States faces in the future. With Russia sitting on a stockpile of nuclear weapons, it is unlikely that the United States will antagonize her. “The ‘secret weapon’ of Russia that instills fear in Western capitals is the decaying Soviet stockpile of nuclear, chemical and possibly biological weapons that may or may not find its way to al Qaeda, depending on the goodwill of Mr. Putin and his KGB entourage. For the West, there is no way of verifying his pledges, not to mention countering clandestine proliferation should he decide to make trouble. That was the rationale behind the Western decision to let Mr. Putin get away with butchering Chechnya and destroying democracy at home” (Zakayev). Concerns of authoritarianism in Russia are likely to be expressed by the United States merely in terms of “suggestions” about how their country should be run.

Russia has an opportunity to become a major player in world affairs in the next few years. Its massive oil reserves will give it clout on the economic front, and economic power inevitably leads to political power. With Western countries, such as the United States, unwilling to interfere because of economic (oil) and security (nuclear proliferation) concerns, Russia will chart her own course. Under the leadership of Putin, Russia will either go down the road of democracy or toward authoritarianism. Indications so far suggest that Putin has chosen the latter. Writer Anson Rabinbach feels that with Putin firmly entrenched in power, Russia’s future is worrisome: “Putin’s overwhelming victory at the polls...supported by media saturation by state-owned television, make him Russia’s most popular and strongest leader since, well, Joseph Stalin.” These are sobering words indeed.

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Robinson cont'd

- Making our next car one that gets at least 32 miles per gallon.
- Whenever possible, walking, biking, carpooling or using mass transit.
- Where possible, choosing an electric utility company that uses clean, renewable energy sources (i.e., solar, wind, hydro) instead of dirty fossil fuels.
- Making small home improvements- using energy-efficient fluorescent lights, weatherproofing our houses, planting native shade trees, cleaning vents and radiators, and/or installing low-flow showerheads.
- Adjusting our thermostats (at home and at work) down 3 degrees in winter and up 3 degrees in summer.
- Washing our laundry in cold or warm water instead of hot.
- Replacing worn-out appliances with Energy Star models, which are more efficient and will cost less to operate.
- Keeping our vehicles in good condition with regular tune-ups, oil changes and proper tire inflation.
- Buying products made locally because cargo ships, airplanes, and trucks burn lots of fossil fuel to transport goods.

I think that each of us has a responsibility to inform ourselves on this vital topic and take immediate action to become part of the solution. We can reduce the size of our “personal footprint” and make energy conscious choices in our daily lifestyle. We can elect government officials who appreciate the importance of sustainable development. We can work to inform our fellow citizens of the consequences of a mass consumption mentality. We can work cooperatively to develop strategies that focus on protecting the planet not just exploiting it.

Medeiros cont'd

number of polygamists and thus it's hard to predict just how significant the effect of legalizing polygamy would be. There are probably not very many polygamists.

The argument that in order to legalize gay marriage one would have to allow people to marry inanimate objects is flat out absurd. An inanimate object is, by definition, not alive, and thus it cannot enter into a legally binding contract. The same truth applies to animals and the deceased, as neither of them can sign a contract. Besides the fact that animals cannot enter into a legally binding contract, there are other problems with people marrying animals. People entering into sexual relationships with animals, often called zoophilia, is only explicitly outlawed in about half the states. Some states do not specifically outlaw zoophilia, choosing rather to charge participants with animal abuse. If homosexual marriage were to be banned on a national level, it would be possible to be living in a state that will not allow two gay consenting adults to be married, but will allow men or women to engage in a sexual relationship with an animal. An animal cannot say no, and it is not difficult to draw a parallel between zoophilia and rape. One possible upside, if you want to call it that, is that STD's are "specie specific" and cannot be transmitted from animal to human. Zoophilia should not be rejected because of the sexual contact between human and animal, but rather because of the potential animal abuse and rape issues.

People are not allowed to marry directly within family for a very good reason. Incest is dangerous. The only reason incest holds such a stigma in the Western hemisphere is that incest results in "an increase in homozygosity, that is, the same allele at the same locus on both members of a chromosome pair. This occurs because close relatives are more likely to share more alleles than non-related individuals." In laymen's terms, incest results in an increased risk of a genetic defect appearing in the next generation. If one family member has a recessive gene for a specific defect, it is likely that another family member shares this gene and were they to breed, the offspring would have an increased chance of possessing this defect. In recent years scientists have hypothesized that the human body is wired to have no attraction to immediate family members. This would offer a possible explanation for the social stigma of incest. It is important to not consider this the definitive word, however, as these results have not been completely accepted by the scientific community.

Inanimate objects cannot legally enter into a contract and even if they could it would be impossible to give them the benefits that marriage permits. How would a toaster be allowed to visit a sick wife/husband in a hospital? The argument that marriage between people and inanimate objects would have to be legalized in order to permit gay marriage is ludicrous and deserves no more room in what

this author considers to be a serious argument for gay marriage. The same reasoning applies to the awful practice of necrophilia and/or marriage to deceased persons.

Whenever the issue of gay marriage is brought up George Bush tells us one thing and one thing only, that he wants to protect the "sanctity of marriage." George Bush is never clear on just what this means so it is difficult to assess the validity of his argument. He seems to be referring to marriage as a respected institution. We live in a country where 50% of marriages will end in divorce. People have been married on TV, with both the bride and groom chosen by the audience. We routinely gossip about the latest celebrity marriage, and are not all that surprised when said marriage ends in divorce a few months, and occasionally a few days, later. Las Vegas is famous for two things: gambling and marriage. In Las Vegas you can get married in 15 minutes, by an Elvis impersonator, naked. Obviously the institution of marriage is not what it once was. Even so, this may actually help President Bush. He might argue that marriage has been marred enough, that there is no reason to mar it further by allowing gays to marry. This argument relies on an undercurrent of inequality, that somehow homosexuals getting married would drag marriage through the dirt even further. Since, by President Bush's own words, "every person is equally American" (and assumably entitled to the same treatment and rights) this is an invalid argument.

There is a middle ground in the gay marriage debate. Civil Unions, which currently are available in Vermont, allow for some of the rights and privileges of marriage to be extended to homosexuals. Civil Unions should be avoided for a number of reasons. The first reason is that they divide people along lines. Secondly, a Civil Union is not the same as a marriage and does not come with the same benefits of a marriage? well, that would directly contradict the government's ruling. In the landmark case of Brown vs Board of Education, the supreme court declared that separate cannot be equal. By giving homosexuals a separate, but supposedly equal, relationship recognized by the state, the government would be denying homosexuals their 14th amendment rights, as homosexuals would be separated solely on the basis of sexual preference.

In the 1960's African Americans fought for equal rights. While homosexuals aren't facing as much discrimination today as African Americans were in the sixties, there are similarities. Just as African Americans were eventually given their rights, homosexuals will eventually be given theirs. It is just a matter of time. The question is not whether or not to grant homosexuals the right to marry, as that question has already been answered. The question is do you want to be remembered as the generation that refused to grant homosexuals equal rights? Even worse, do you want to be remembered as the generation who supported a Constitutional amendment limiting rights?

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--The Editors