

November 30, 2008

Mark Steyn says Mumbai could happen anywhere.

... This isn't law enforcement but an ideological assault – and we're fighting the symptoms not the cause. Islamic imperialists want an Islamic society, not just in Palestine and Kashmir but in the Netherlands and Britain, too. Their chances of getting it will be determined by the ideology's advance among the general Muslim population, and the general Muslim population's demographic advance among everybody else.

So Bush is history, and we have a new president who promises to heal the planet, and yet the jihadists don't seem to have got the Obama message that there are no enemies, just friends we haven't yet held talks without preconditions with. This isn't about repudiating the Bush years, or withdrawing from Iraq, or even liquidating Israel. It's bigger than that. And if you don't have a strategy for beating back the ideology, you'll lose.

Whoops, my apologies. I mean "suspected ideology."

Karl Rove gives high marks to Obama's economic team.

... Mr. Obama's announcement of his economic team on Monday provided surprisingly positive clarity. He picked as Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, the respected, soft-spoken New York Fed president. Mr. Geithner has been a key player with Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke in confronting the financial crisis. Every major decision in the rescue effort came only after the three agreed.

The National Economic Council director-designee, Larry Summers, is another solid pick. Mr. Summers has been an advocate for trade liberalization, he was the Clinton administration's negotiator for the financial deregulation known as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, and he even attempted to rein in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the 1990s.

Mr. Obama also named a respected monetary expert -- Christina Romer -- to head up his Council of Economic Advisors. On Tuesday he selected a first-rate thinker, Peter Orszag, to be director of the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

The only troubling personnel note was Melody Barnes as Domestic Policy Council director. Putting a former aide to Ted Kennedy in charge of health policy after tapping universal health-care advocate Tom Daschle to be Health and Human Services secretary sends a clear signal that Mr. Obama didn't mean it when his campaign ads said he wouldn't run to the "extremes" with government-run health care. ...

Hugh Hewitt's chat with Mark Steyn covers terror, turmoil, and turkeys.

... HH: Mark Steyn, let's turn to the economic panic of recent weeks, and to the appointment by Barack Obama of a new Treasury secretary, a chief economic advisor in Lawrence Summers, a Council of Economic Advisors chair in Christina Romer. These are very mainstream, not at all radical socialists. How do you tote up the score on his economic team?

MS: Well, Bill Clinton used to like to tell people that he governed as an Eisenhower Republican. And there's a lot of truth to that. If you imagine an Ike with a serious pants dropping problem, there is a lot of truth to that. And given that what we're seeing is basically some retro, back to the 90s reconstruction of the Clinton administration, it's not a big surprise to see Summers and Volker and a lot of very reassuring Eisenhower Republican type names, in effect, coming back. I think in a sense, that reflects Obama's caution. You know, clearly the entire Western financial system is incredibly vulnerable at the moment. We saw the way Iceland just went belly up a couple of weeks ago. If you look at the numbers, and if you look at the levels of personal credit, in some senses, one could make the case that the United Kingdom is headed the same way. I mean, there could be some major countries whose financial systems take absolutely disastrous hits over this. The

last thing you want to do is come up with guys who are either inexperienced or have radical ideas. In a sense, this is Obama's caution asserting itself.

HH: *Does the center-right dare hope that Obama will turn out to be a talk left-govern right kind of figure?*

MS: *Well, you know, in the sense that...Bush was not a conservative in key respects, and that made it hard for conservative pundits to challenge him, because in effect, you always feel uncomfortable challenging your own guy. If Obama keeps a lot of the Bush personnel, and many of the same Bush policies in place, it's actually very liberating for conservative intellectuals, because they can challenge them untrammelled. But I would caution against the idea that somehow all this marvelous continuity means that nothing important was really lost on November 4th. I think the ratchet effect in American politics, the drift towards socialized health care, the drift toward a majority of the population who pay no federal income tax, these are all disastrous trends in American life which are not good for American conservatism. ...*

Jonah Goldberg says Dems sending their kids to private schools in DC is not the real scandal. ... *So if Obama and other politicians don't want to send their kids to schools where even the principals have such views, that's no scandal. The scandal is that these politicians tolerate such awful schools at all. For anyone.*

The main reason politicians adopt a policy of malign neglect: teachers unions, arguably the single worst mainstream institution in our country today. No group has a stronger or better-organized stranglehold on a political party than they do. No group is more committed to putting ideological blather and self-interest before the public good. ...

Donald Boudreaux writes on the bounty of the market.

... A modern market economy is of a degree of complexity far outstripping the comprehension of any mortal. We miss this complexity because such economies work astonishingly well. Or, rather, we would be astonished at how well they work if we took the time to reflect upon their daily achievements.

Every morning the bagel store is filled with fresh, hot bagels; the supermarket shelves burst with milk and meats and coffee and toothpaste; the lights come on when we flip the switch, the water rushes out when we turn on the faucet, and the phone rings when a friend calls us.

These occurrences, and thousands of others just like them, are routine. Boringly so. They are as much a part of our ordinary existence as is water to a fish. And just as the fish never pauses to give thanks for the all-encompassing water that sustains his life -- indeed, just as the fish likely never really notices the water -- we almost never pause to reflect on the commercial world that is almost as vital to our sustenance as is the air we breathe.

In fact, the only times we do notice the commercial world is on those rare occasions when it is obstructed or working poorly. When there's no gasoline at the service station, we feel as if some near-sacred right of ours is being assaulted. ...

Holman Jenkins on the real cause of Detroit's problems.

The wrong folks were in the witness chairs in last week's congressional hearings on auto doom. A fantastic moment was Massachusetts Rep. Stephen Lynch assailing Rick Wagoner about whether GM was asking China for a bailout too. The implication seemed to be that GM can't afford its inflated UAW pay packages because it's squandering money to build cars in China.

Mr. Wagoner mildly answered that GM's China operations are profitable. They actually help to underwrite the massive losses in the U.S.

Mr. Lynch showed no sign he was actually listening, having illustrated his disapproval of foreigners. He didn't ask the obvious question: If GM can make cars profitably in China, why doesn't GM import them to the U.S.?

For that matter, any of the brainpans on the Hill might have asked why Ford and GM managed to build viable auto businesses all over the world but not in North America.

You don't need the Hubble telescope to tell the answer: The UAW is present only in the U.S., not all over the world. ...

We learn from the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) that the NY Times in profiling Vaclav Klaus starts off quoting an 80's report on him by Communist secret police. Way to be classy Gray Lady. That's it! Pickerhead is finally going to cancel the weekend Times. Came close when the Times reporter profiling Cindy McCain used Facebook to contact McCain's daughter's friends looking for dirty dish. Want to read about that again? [Click here for the Oct 21, 2008 Pickings - Go to the third item.](#)

As the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, an economist, anti-totalitarian and climate change sceptic, prepares to take up the rotating presidency of the European Union next year, climate alarmists are doing their best to traduce him.

The New York Times opened a profile of Klaus, 67, this week with a quote from a 1980s communist secret agent's report, claiming he behaves like a "rejected genius", and asserts there is "palpable fear" he will "embarrass" the EU.

But the real fear driving climate alarmists wild is that a more rational approach to the fundamentalist religion of global warming may be in the ascendancy - whether in the parliamentary offices of the world's largest trading bloc or in the living rooms of Blacktown.

As the global financial crisis takes hold, perhaps people are starting to wonder whether the so-called precautionary principle, which would have us accept enormous new taxes in the guise of an emissions trading scheme and curtail economic growth, is justified, based on what we actually know about climate.

One of Australia's leading enviro-sceptics, the geologist and University of Adelaide professor Ian Plimer, 62, says he has noticed audiences becoming more receptive to his message that climate change has always occurred and there is nothing we can do to stop it. ...

[Global Warming foolishness](#) spreads to counting acorns. (BTW, the oaks in on the Virginia Peninsula are having a good acorn crop this year.)

[News Biscuit](#) reports UK unemployment is being attacked with a program called "Guide Blokes for the Blind."

When terrorists attack, media analysts go into Sherlock Holmes mode, metaphorically prowling the crime scene for footprints, as if the way to solve the mystery is to add up all the clues. The Mumbai gunmen seized British and American tourists. Therefore, it must be an attack on Westerners!

Not so, said Newsweek's Fareed Zakaria. If they'd wanted to do that, they'd have hit the Hilton or the Marriott or some other target-rich chain hotel. The Taj and the Oberoi are both Indian-owned, and popular watering holes with wealthy Indians.

OK, how about this group that's claimed responsibility for the attack? The Deccan Mujahideen. As a thousand TV anchors asked Wednesday night, "What do we know about them?"

Er, well, nothing. Because they didn't exist until they issued the press release. "Deccan" is the name of the vast plateau that covers most of the triangular peninsula that forms the lower half of the Indian subcontinent. It comes from the Prakrit word "dakkhin," which means "south." Which means nothing at all. "Deccan Mujahideen" is like calling yourself the "Continental Shelf Liberation Front."

OK. So does that mean this operation was linked to al-Qaida? Well, no. Not if by "linked to" you mean a wholly owned subsidiary coordinating its activities with the corporate head office.

It's not an either/or scenario, it's all of the above. Yes, the terrorists targeted locally owned hotels. But they singled out Britons and Americans as hostages. Yes, they attacked prestige city landmarks like the Victoria Terminus, one of the most splendid and historic railway stations in the world. But they also attacked an obscure Jewish community center. The Islamic imperialist project is a totalitarian ideology: It is at war with Hindus, Jews, Americans, Britons, everything that is other.

In the 10 months before this atrocity, Muslim terrorists killed more than 200 people in India, and no one paid much attention. Just business as usual, alas. In Mumbai the perpetrators were canner. They launched a multiple indiscriminate assault on soft targets, and then in the confusion began singling out A-list prey: Not just wealthy Western tourists, but local orthodox Jews, and municipal law enforcement. They drew prominent officials to selected sites, and then gunned down the head of the antiterrorism squad and two of his most senior lieutenants. They attacked a hospital, the place you're supposed to take the victims to, thereby destabilizing the city's emergency-response system.

And, aside from dozens of corpses, they were rewarded with instant, tangible, economic damage to India: the Bombay Stock Exchange was still closed Friday, and the England cricket team canceled their tour (a shameful act).

What's relevant about the Mumbai model is that it would work in just about any second-tier city in any democratic state: Seize multiple soft targets, and overwhelm the municipal infrastructure to the point where any emergency plan will simply be swamped by the sheer scale of events. Try it in, say, Mayor Nagin's New Orleans. All you need is the manpower. Given the numbers of gunmen, clearly there was a significant local component. On the other hand, whether or not Pakistan's deeply sinister ISI had their fingerprints all over it, it would seem unlikely that there was no external involvement. After all, if you look at every jihad front from the London Tube bombings to the Iraqi insurgency, you'll find local lads and wily outsiders: That's pretty much a given.

But we're in danger of missing the forest for the trees. The forest is the ideology. It's the ideology that determines whether you can find enough young hotshot guys in the neighborhood willing to strap on a suicide belt or (rather more promising as a long-term career) at least grab an AK-47 and shoot up a hotel lobby. Or, if active terrorists are a bit thin on the ground, whether you can count at least on some degree of

broader support on the ground. You're sitting in some distant foreign capital but you're of a mind to pull off a Mumbai-style operation in, say, Amsterdam or Manchester or Toronto. Where would you start? Easy. You know the radical mosques, and the other ideological front organizations. You've already made landfall.

It's missing the point to get into debates about whether this is the "Deccan Mujahideen" or the ISI or al-Qaida or Lashkar-e-Taiba. That's a reductive argument. It could be all or none of them. The ideology has been so successfully seeded around the world that nobody needs a memo from corporate HQ to act: There are so many of these subgroups and individuals that they intersect across the planet in a million different ways. It's not the Cold War, with a small network of deep sleepers being directly controlled by Moscow. There are no membership cards, only an ideology. That's what has radicalized hitherto moderate Muslim communities from Indonesia to the central Asian 'stans to Yorkshire, and co-opted what started out as more or less conventional nationalist struggles in the Caucasus and the Balkans into mere tentacles of the global jihad.

Many of us, including the incoming Obama administration, look at this as a law-enforcement matter. Mumbai is a crime scene, so let's surround the perimeter with yellow police tape, send in the forensics squad, and then wait for the D.A. to file charges.

There was a photograph that appeared in many of the British papers, taken by a Reuters man and captioned by the news agency as follows: "A suspected gunman walks outside the premises of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus or Victoria Terminus railway station." The photo of the "suspected gunman" showed a man holding a gun. We don't know much about him – he might be Muslim or Episcopalian, he might be an impoverished uneducated victim of Western colonialist economic oppression or a former vice-president of Lehman Brothers embarking on an exciting midlife career change – but one thing we ought to be able to say for certain is that a man pointing a gun is not a "suspected gunman" but a gunman. "This kind of silly political correctness infects reporters and news services worldwide," wrote John Hinderaker of Powerline. "They think they're being scrupulous – the man hasn't been convicted of being a gunman yet! – when, in fact, they're just being foolish. But the irrational conviction that nothing can be known unless it has been determined by a court and jury isn't just silly, it's dangerous."

Just so. This isn't law enforcement but an ideological assault – and we're fighting the symptoms not the cause. Islamic imperialists want an Islamic society, not just in Palestine and Kashmir but in the Netherlands and Britain, too. Their chances of getting it will be determined by the ideology's advance among the general Muslim population, and the general Muslim population's demographic advance among everybody else.

So Bush is history, and we have a new president who promises to heal the planet, and yet the jihadists don't seem to have got the Obama message that there are no enemies, just friends we haven't yet held talks without preconditions with. This isn't about repudiating the Bush years, or withdrawing from Iraq, or even liquidating Israel. It's bigger than that. And if you don't have a strategy for beating back the ideology, you'll lose.

Whoops, my apologies. I mean "suspected ideology."

Thanksgiving Cheer From Obama

He's assembled a first-rate economic team.

by Karl Rove

When President-elect Barack Obama's economic transition team met this month, everyone was there -- inflation fighters, business leaders, union firebrands and leftist economists -- creating confusion about where the new administration was headed.



President-elect Barack Obama with members of his announced economic team, from left: Treasury Secretary-designate Timothy Geithner; Council of Economic Advisers Chair-designate Christina Romer; National Economic Council Director-designate Lawrence Summers; and Director of White House Policy Council-designate Melody Barnes.

Mr. Obama's announcement of his economic team on Monday provided surprisingly positive clarity. He picked as Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, the respected, soft-spoken New York Fed president. Mr. Geithner has been a key player with Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke in confronting the financial crisis. Every major decision in the rescue effort came only after the three agreed.

The National Economic Council director-designee, Larry Summers, is another solid pick. Mr. Summers has been an advocate for trade liberalization, he was the Clinton administration's negotiator for the financial deregulation known as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, and he even attempted to rein in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the 1990s.

Mr. Obama also named a respected monetary expert -- Christina Romer -- to head up his Council of Economic Advisors. On Tuesday he selected a first-rate thinker, Peter Orszag, to be director of the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

The only troubling personnel note was Melody Barnes as Domestic Policy Council director. Putting a former aide to Ted Kennedy in charge of health policy after tapping universal health-care advocate Tom Daschle to be Health and Human Services secretary sends a clear signal that Mr. Obama didn't mean it when his campaign ads said he wouldn't run to the "extremes" with government-run health care.

He did not reduce confusion on a Detroit bailout by saying he supported a "sustainable auto industry." America already has that in 69 foreign-owned auto plants that employ 92,700 Americans. The question is this: Does Mr. Obama want a sustainable U.S.-owned auto industry? If so, will he require changes in the Big Three's management, labor agreements and cost structure in return for aid? All he'd say Monday was that the industry needed to develop a plan.

And despite the president-elect's declaration Monday that "we have a consensus, which is pretty rare, between conservative and liberal economists," there is no agreement about the elements of a stimulus package.

Stanford economist Michael Boskin reminds us that conservatives favor permanent, or long-lived, measures to revive the economy -- incentives like lower income-tax rates, actions to speed recovery of capital costs like bonus depreciation, and steps with an immediate effect on job creation such as cuts in corporate tax rates.

So far, Mr. Obama has only offered unspecified subsidies for "green jobs" and infrastructure spending. Politicians like infrastructure spending because it gives them something concrete to point to. But though Japan spent \$516 billion on infrastructure in the 1990s, it didn't stimulate their economy. What makes Mr. Obama think it will work in America? The reason infrastructure is a poor stimulant is that there is a long lag time between project approval and when dollars actually get spent, even for projects on the drawing board.

Mr. Obama suggests that giving consumers up to \$500 (his "tax cut for 95% of Americans") will stimulate consumption. Congressional Democrats have demanded rebates like this for people who don't pay income taxes in every stimulus package -- with negligible results. As Harvard economist Martin Feldstein pointed out in these pages in August, a mere 10% to 20% of this year's rebate was spent.

During the campaign, Mr. Obama defined madness as "doing the same things over and over again and expecting something different." He should take those words to heart in preparing his stimulus package

Mr. Obama has less than a month to work out the dimensions of the stimulus and auto legislation he wants passed before his Jan. 20 inauguration. If he continues to hesitate, Congress will give him a mish-mash of spending, rebates, subsidies and pork that won't create the 2.5 million jobs in two years he promises. Congress is hard to stop from budgetary excesses in ordinary times. And these are not ordinary times.

After hearing Mr. Obama's campaign attacks on "the swelling budget deficit," it is jarring to hear him now suggest the deficit will need to be larger to accommodate more spending. He has to be mindful that voters have not been prepared for the numbers now being thrown around.

But, overall, Monday's announcement of Mr. Obama's economic team was reassuring. He's generally surrounded himself with intelligent, mainstream advisers. Investors, workers and business owners can only hope that, over time, this new administration's economic policies bear more of their market-oriented imprint.

Mr. Rove is the former senior adviser and deputy chief of staff to President George W. Bush.

Hugh Hewitt.com

[Hugh and Mark Steyn discuss terror in India, turmoil on Wall Street, and turkey bloodlust](#)

HH: I wish I could say Happy Thanksgiving Eve to you, but it's not. There's a massive terror assault still underway at this hour in Bombay, India. Joining me to discuss this and other matters, Mark Steyn, Columnist To the World. You can find all of Mark's writings eventually at www.steynonline.com. Mark, evidently the election of Barack Obama did not end the struggle by barbarians against Western civilization.

MS: No, it didn't, and I think when you look at this attack, which was on, I believe, at least seven different locations, a coordinated attack against luxury hotels and other prestige targets, it's clear it must have been in the works before the election of November 4th. So in effect, these guys figure it makes no difference who's in the White House. It doesn't matter whether it's Bush or McCain or Obama or Dennis Kucinich. That's not a factor in their thinking.

HH: Mark Steyn, I have never been to Bombay. Have you?

MS: Yes, I have.

HH: Okay, give us a sense of what this part of town is like. There are many different conflicting reports, but it looks like the posh, poshest of the areas of town.

MS: Yes, it is, and it's in some ways, when you walk around it, you do get a sense of Edwin Lutyens' India, with its quite beautiful architecture. But at the same time, you also get a sense of a kind of teeming, bustling, huge population living in great poverty just beyond. And Bombay is, you know, to play demographics bore for a moment, Bombay is typical of a lot of parts of India. As you know, the largest number of Muslims in the world actually live in democratic India. But they're birth rate is significantly higher than the Hindu population of India. And so remorselessly, cities that once had a relatively constrained Muslim population, that Muslim population is growing in relation to the Hindu population.

HH: Mark Steyn, when I first saw this starting to occur and unfold, I've been watching it for about two and a half hours now, my thoughts went back to the SWIFT program, which had previously successfully interdicted Hambali, one of the great sub-continent terrorists, caught him in Thailand. Of course, the news of the SWIFT program leaked by the New York Times, Los Angeles Times and others, this is a massive attack involving many, many terrorists at many different locations, the sort of attack where vast amounts of money had to be deployed. And you have to wonder whether or not these security leaks over the years has made it very, very difficult for us to track these people.

MS: Well, I think the New York Times' view of this situation, and indeed as far as one can tell, Barack Obama's view, I don't rule out, by the way, that this might be, insofar as it's connected to Obama, it might be a preemptive response to his planned invasion of Pakistan, which should be taking place in two or three months time. But that aside, I mean, essentially the view here is, of the New York Times, is that terrorism is a law enforcement matter. Obama feels terrorism is a law enforcement matter. Well, what law enforcement means is you investigate a crime after it's occurred. You wait until the liquor store's held up, and then you investigate it and find out who held it up. I don't think that works with terrorism. At the last count, dozens of people are dead, whatever it is now, 80-90 people are dead. British and American visitors in those luxury hotels like the Taj Mahal Palace have been targeted and singled out and taken hostages. And that is not a law enforcement matter. You don't want to be investigating that after it happens. You want to stop it before it happens. And that's where things like leaking the details of the SWIFT program by the New York Times are actually quite disgraceful, and in fact in most societies throughout human history would have been regarded as an act of treason.

HH: In terms of the first appointments that the President-elect has made on his national security team, he does seem to be trending towards realism in this regard with the decision to retain Robert Gates and to bring in General James Jones as the national security advisor.

MS: Well, I think he's signaling continuity, but I don't think there's any doubt that as far, for example, as the Europeans see this, and India, by the way, is slightly different, because one of the great legacies of the Bush presidency has been the strengthening of ties between India and Washington. George W. Bush has phenomenal popularity ratings, by the way, in India. But I think as far as the Europeans are concerned, and also the Saudis and the other Middle Eastern regimes, what happened on November 4th drew a line under the so-called war on terror. They feel that's Bush's war, it dies with the Bush administration. And they're looking forward to Barack Obama not just dialing back the rhetoric, but dialing back the zealous prosecution of this thing. And so as far as the Continent and the Middle East are concerned, I think they're looking, I think they look on November 4th as a kind of repudiation of the whole concept of the Bush war.

HH: ABC News this afternoon reporting word of an FBI alert with regards to the New York City subway system and the train system in and around the island of Manhattan. I have to think that if terrorists could do anything, they would love to be able to attack the United States before Bush leaves office, just as a sendoff kick in the pants.

MS: Yes, I think that is true. I think they hate him with a particular fury because he destroyed their camps in Afghanistan, and he toppled the leader who most obviously cocked a snook at the entire Western world, Saddam Hussein. So there's a lot of personal hatred for Bush among those Islamist radicals. But the reality

is that whoever's sitting in the White House, this goes on. Most of these guys, you think about it, most of these guys, they don't know who the Democrats are or who the Republicans are. They hate America. And this idea that somehow if you strike against America, you're striking at Bush, and if Bush would just go away, all of this trouble would just go away, that's not true. This is an existential challenge to Western civilization, and it goes on no matter who's sitting in the White House.

HH: Mark Steyn, let's turn to the economic panic of recent weeks, and to the appointment by Barack Obama of a new Treasury secretary, a chief economic advisor in Lawrence Summers, a Council of Economic Advisors chair in Christina Romer. These are very mainstream, not at all radical socialists. How do you tote up the score on his economic team?

MS: Well, Bill Clinton used to like to tell people that he governed as an Eisenhower Republican. And there's a lot of truth to that. If you imagine an Ike with a serious pants dropping problem, there is a lot of truth to that. And given that what we're seeing is basically some retro, back to the 90s reconstruction of the Clinton administration, it's not a big surprise to see Summers and Volker and a lot of very reassuring Eisenhower Republican type names, in effect, coming back. I think in a sense, that reflects Obama's caution. You know, clearly the entire Western financial system is incredibly vulnerable at the moment. We saw the way Iceland just went belly up a couple of weeks ago. If you look at the numbers, and if you look at the levels of personal credit, in some senses, one could make the case that the United Kingdom is headed the same way. I mean, there could be some major countries whose financial systems take absolutely disastrous hits over this. The last thing you want to do is come up with guys who are either inexperienced or have radical ideas. In a sense, this is Obama's caution asserting itself.

HH: Does the center-right dare hope that Obama will turn out to be a talk left-govern right kind of figure?

MS: Well, you know, in the sense that...Bush was not a conservative in key respects, and that made it hard for conservative pundits to challenge him, because in effect, you always feel uncomfortable challenging your own guy. If Obama keeps a lot of the Bush personnel, and many of the same Bush policies in place, it's actually very liberating for conservative intellectuals, because they can challenge them untrammelled. But I would caution against the idea that somehow all this marvelous continuity means that nothing important was really lost on November 4th. I think the ratchet effect in American politics, the drift towards socialized health care, the drift toward a majority of the population who pay no federal income tax, these are all disastrous trends in American life which are not good for American conservatism.

HH: Now I have to conclude our conversation today, Mark Steyn, by asking about the pardon authority you have in your household for any turkeys that might be nearby the Steyn manse in New Hampshire.

MS: Well, it's actually the opposite. I was, you know, I wasn't really in a killing frenzy. The whiff of blood had not yet hit my nostrils. But after seeing that Sarah Palin video, I was so fired up with the old bloodlust, we're slaughtering everything in sight here. Nobody gets pardoned. We're feasting tomorrow.

HH: And are you turkey eaters or duck eaters or goose eaters up there?

MS: Well, we like to save the goose for Christmas Day. What is it? Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat. And that's what we do. We have a nice goose on Christmas Day, and so we generally do the turkey on Thanksgiving, because turkey, in Britain, everybody has turkey for Christmas, and I find it very boring for Christmas. But somehow it tastes a lot better if you have it at the end of November.

HH: Mark Steyn, a Happy Thanksgiving to you, thank you for gracing the show all this year and for many more, and have a great holiday.

MS: And Happy Thanksgiving to you, too, Hugh.

End of interview.

Jewish World Review

The true school scandal

by Jonah Goldberg

Hypocrisy is an overblown sin. Better to be a hypocrite who occasionally violates his principles than a villain who never does.

I bring this up because the usual, and entirely expected, round of conservative complaints about Barack Obama's public-schools hypocrisy has begun, and I'm finding it all a bit tedious.

The Obamas will send their two daughters to the expensive private school Sidwell Friends. Yes, that makes him something of a hypocrite because he is a vocal opponent of giving poor kids anything like the same option.

But you know what? Who cares? Personally, I would think less of the Obamas if they sent their kids to bad schools out of some ideological principle. Parents' first obligation is to do right by their own kids.

In Washington, we have these arguments every time a rich Democrat sends his kids to private schools, which is very often. The real issue is why the public schools are unacceptable to pretty much anyone, liberal or conservative, who has other options. Maybe in the rich suburbs of New York or Los Angeles, wealthy opponents of school choice run less risk of being labeled hypocrites; they can skip the pricey private schools because their public campuses aren't hellholes.

But most Washington public schools are hellholes. So parents here — including the first family — find hypocrisy a small price to pay for fulfilling their parental obligations.

According to data compiled by the Washington Post in 2007, of the 100 largest school districts in the country, D.C. ranks third in spending for each student, around \$13,000 a pupil, but last in spending on instruction. More than half of every dollar of education spending goes to the salaries of administrators. Test scores are abysmal; the campuses are often unsafe.

Michelle Rhee, D.C.'s heroic school chancellor, in her 17 months on the job has already made meaningful improvements. But that's grading on an enormous curve. The Post recently reported that on observing a bad teacher in a classroom, Rhee complained to the principal. "Would you put your grandchild in that class?" she asked.

"If that's the standard," replied the defensive principal, "we don't have any effective teachers in my school."

So if Obama and other politicians don't want to send their kids to schools where even the principals have such views, that's no scandal. The scandal is that these politicians tolerate such awful schools at all. For anyone.

The main reason politicians adopt a policy of malign neglect: teachers unions, arguably the single worst mainstream institution in our country today. No group has a stronger or better-organized stranglehold on a political party than they do. No group is more committed to putting ideological blather and self-interest before the public good.

Rhee has been pushing a new contract that would provide merit pay to successful teachers. The system is voluntary: Individual teachers can stay in the current system that rewards mere seniority or opt to join a parallel system that pays for superior performance. Many talented teachers would love the opportunity.

Alas, the national teachers unions insist that linking pay to results is an outrageous attack on the integrity of public schools. They have insisted that D.C. teachers not even be allowed to vote on the contract.

The Democratic Party continues to tolerate this sort of thing because public school teachers continue to be reliably liberal voters. And their unions cut big checks.

Obama, however, bragged about being different during his campaign. He declared himself independent from teachers unions and boasted his support for Rhee. But his recent appointment of Stanford professor — and teachers union apologist — Linda Darling-Hammond to head his education transition team is seen by many as a sign that reformers like Rhee can expect little support from the new White House.

And where are the Republicans? Well, if you want a good example of why hypocrisy isn't the worst thing in the world, just look at the GOP. Because the party supports school-choice vouchers, it's simply out of the debate. School choice has much to recommend it. But it's no silver bullet, and vouchers will never gain full acceptance in rich suburbs.

School choice does immunize Republicans from the charge of hypocrisy, however. So rich Republicans can send their kids to ritzy private schools without fear of violating their principles. Good for them. Unfortunately, their principled insulation also makes them largely irrelevant to a debate in which people like Rhee could use all the help they can get.

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

The market's bounty

by Donald J. Boudreaux

Ludwig von Mises, the great Austrian economist who died in 1973, described what he called "the logic of interventionism." This logic is simple if sad. Government interventions into the economy, being much more likely than not to worsen matters, beget more government interventions.

In part, this ratcheting up of interventionism is due to the panicked turn to government whenever new problems arise. Another part of this ratcheting, though, is caused by the fact that the newly arisen problems are seldom traced to their root causes -- that is, to the interventions themselves.

A modern market economy is of a degree of complexity far outstripping the comprehension of any mortal. We miss this complexity because such economies work astonishingly well. Or, rather, we *would* be astonished at how well they work if we took the time to reflect upon their daily achievements.

Every morning the bagel store is filled with fresh, hot bagels; the supermarket shelves burst with milk and meats and coffee and toothpaste; the lights come on when we flip the switch, the water rushes out when we turn on the faucet, and the phone rings when a friend calls us.

These occurrences, and thousands of others just like them, are routine. Boringly so. They are as much a part of our ordinary existence as is water to a fish. And just as the fish never pauses to give thanks for the all-encompassing water that sustains his life -- indeed, just as the fish likely never really notices the water -- we almost never pause to reflect on the commercial world that is almost as vital to our sustenance as is the air we breathe.

In fact, the only times we *do* notice the commercial world is on those rare occasions when it is obstructed or working poorly. When there's no gasoline at the service station, we feel as if some near-sacred right of ours is being assaulted.

We're angry at the station owner or the oil companies; things are not as they should be! We should have gasoline whenever and wherever and in whatever quantities we desire. That's how *our* world works! When it doesn't work that way, something is amiss.

Economists have a familiar theory to explain the role of government. According to that theory, government's core function is to correct "market failures" -- such as the alleged inability of the market to supply "public goods" like pollution abatement, national defense and law and order.

Debates rage within the academy on how extensive are such market failures in reality and how reliable government is likely to be in correcting them. But few scholars question the premise that the need to correct market failures is the core reason that people overwhelmingly feel a need for government.

This premise is faulty. Precisely because the market works so reliably and without hoopla -- precisely because, say, Bill Gates can create hundreds of billions of dollars of value for consumers worldwide while he gets paid only a fraction of that amount -- that is, precisely because the market so seldom fails -- people take markets for granted.

In modern America, the market's bounty is assumed always to be there, as if it emerges naturally from the soil, available for us to "redistribute" as we wish.

Too many Americans -- especially in the punditry -- are both ignorant about how life would be if markets were severely hamstrung and oblivious to markets' reliance on freedom and security of property rights.

This ignorance and obliviousness combine to fuel calls for government-supplied universal medical care, massive bailouts of "ailing" industries, heavy regulations to "cool" the planet, higher taxes to "equalize" incomes and social engineering to keep us from driving, smoking, eating foods and doing any of those things that the Enlightened have concluded are bad for us.

So in this season when we Americans give special thanks for our blessings, let's better understand what those blessing are. The blessings for which we should be thankful are not fertile land, for those produced no great wealth until modern commercial markets developed on this continent. The blessings are not a democratic government in and of itself, for majorities can be as tyrannical and as unwise as any dictator.

The blessing for which we should be most grateful is that we still live in a society in which markets remain the chief means of directing economic activity. Let us give thanks that, despite the many hurdles put in the way of people who make their way in markets, those markets continue to operate powerfully, reliably and smoothly. And let us ask whatever powers that be that we not risk any further meddling with this quiet source of our bounty.

WSJ

[A Car Wreck Made in Washington](#)

Can Democrats afford to let Detroit succeed?

by Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

The wrong folks were in the witness chairs in last week's congressional hearings on auto doom. A fantastic moment was Massachusetts Rep. Stephen Lynch assailing Rick Wagoner about whether GM was asking China for a bailout too. The implication seemed to be that GM can't afford its inflated UAW pay packages because it's squandering money to build cars in China.



The General Motors assembly plant in Arlington, Texas.

Mr. Wagoner mildly answered that GM's China operations are profitable. They actually help to underwrite the massive losses in the U.S.

Mr. Lynch showed no sign he was actually listening, having illustrated his disapproval of foreigners. He didn't ask the obvious question: If GM can make cars profitably in China, why doesn't GM import them to the U.S.?

For that matter, any of the brainpans on the Hill might have asked why Ford and GM managed to build viable auto businesses all over the world but not in North America.

You don't need the Hubble telescope to tell the answer: The UAW is present only in the U.S., not all over the world.

What you wouldn't know is that the single biggest factor in preserving the UAW's monopolistic power has not been labor law but Congress's fuel-economy rules. These effectively have required the Big Three to lose tens of billions making small cars at a loss in UAW factories. Not only were the companies obliged to forgo profits they might have earned importing such cars, but CAFE deprived them of crucial leverage to control labor costs by threatening to move jobs to a factory in Spain or Taiwan or Poland. (Let's face it, that's what other successful U.S. manufacturers do.)

All this was deliberately designed to give the UAW the means to defend uncompetitive wages in the face of a globalizing auto business. It had nothing to do with making sure Americans have high-mileage cars. Yet not a single legislator last week breathed a hint of recognition that something might be behind Detroit's woes other than an improbable series of "stupid decisions" (as another Massachusetts congressman put it) by 18 CEOs over 30 years.

There's a larger lesson here for the Obama administration. A whole lot of Rube Goldbergism is coming home to roost, in the auto business, in the mortgage market, in the health-care market, in farm policy. We need to simple-down. The economy has a giant adjustment ahead, paying off debts, going from a heavy absorber of foreign capital and goods to a rebalanced relationship with the world.

The good news is that we have a natively resilient, flexible economy capable of making these adjustments -- unless bound up in Rube Goldbergian mandates. Barack Obama, bless his heart, may or may not be ready for what's coming his way. Yet his objectives are perfectly amenable to the simple-down approach.

He asked on Monday for Detroit to deliver a "plan" somehow to reconcile, at long last, the fantasy life of Washington, with nobody losing a job, with super energy-efficient cars, and yet somehow all this being done at a profit to Detroit.

Here's a plan, but it requires Mr. Obama to play a role too, finally relinquishing such chronic free-lunchism where autos are concerned. He should simply get rid of the CAFE rules and impose a gasoline tax to move

the country to a "new energy economy," if he really believes in panicky climate predictions and/or that "energy independence" would be a net improver of American welfare. And be prepared for Detroit to shift jobs offshore if the UAW won't concede competitive labor agreements.

Not acceptable? Here's an alternative plan: Buy out the UAW with taxpayer dollars and free the Big Three to staff their factories with nonunion workers the way Toyota and Honda and BMW do. Last week's Hill circus notwithstanding, the negotiation that really needs to take place now is between Democrats and their union allies. The Big Three executives are just in the way.

Of course, Mr. Obama may have ideas of his own. His climate speech last week was Rube on steroids, aimed at creating whole client sectors of the economy dependent on his favor and endlessly flowing subsidies. It would be a poor excuse indeed of an economic depression that didn't create demagogic opportunities to boss around entire patches of the economy and extract political rents for doing so. There will be plenty of scope for Mr. Obama to head in this direction if he chooses.

Then again, he might just hand the next election cycle to the GOP, assuming Republicans can figure out that they're supposed to be the party of non-Rube-Goldberg government.

Sidney Morning Herald, Australia **[Beware the church of climate alarm](#)**

by Miranda Devine

As the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, an economist, anti-totalitarian and climate change sceptic, prepares to take up the rotating presidency of the European Union next year, climate alarmists are doing their best to traduce him.

The New York Times opened a profile of Klaus, 67, this week with a quote from a 1980s communist secret agent's report, claiming he behaves like a "rejected genius", and asserts there is "palpable fear" he will "embarrass" the EU.

But the real fear driving climate alarmists wild is that a more rational approach to the fundamentalist religion of global warming may be in the ascendancy - whether in the parliamentary offices of the world's largest trading bloc or in the living rooms of Blacktown.

As the global financial crisis takes hold, perhaps people are starting to wonder whether the so-called precautionary principle, which would have us accept enormous new taxes in the guise of an emissions trading scheme and curtail economic growth, is justified, based on what we actually know about climate.

One of Australia's leading enviro-sceptics, the geologist and University of Adelaide professor Ian Plimer, 62, says he has noticed audiences becoming more receptive to his message that climate change has always occurred and there is nothing we can do to stop it.

In a speech at the American Club in Sydney on Monday night for *Quadrant* magazine, titled *Human-Induced Climate Change - A Lot Of Hot Air*, Plimer debunked climate-change myths.

"Climates always change," he said. Our climate has changed in cycles over millions of years, as the orbit of the planet wobbles and our distance from the sun changes, for instance, or as the sun itself produces variable amounts of radiation. "All of this affects climate. It is impossible to stop climate change. Climates have always changed and they always will."

His two-hour presentation included more than 50 charts and graphs, as well as almost 40 pages of references. It is the basis of his new book, *Heaven And Earth: The Missing Science Of Global Warming*, to be published early next year.

Plimer said one of the charts, which plots atmospheric carbon dioxide and temperature over 500 million years, with seemingly little correlation, demonstrates one of the "lessons from history" to which geologists are privy: "There is no relationship between CO² and temperature."

Another slide charts the alternating periods of cooling and warming on Earth, with the Pleistocene Ice Age starting 110,000 years ago and giving way, 14,700 years ago, to the Bolling warm period for 800 years. This in turn gave way to the Older Dryas cooling for 300 years, then the Allerod warming for 700 years, and so on, until the cooling of the Little Ice Age from 1300 to 1850. Since 1850, we have lived through the "Modern Warming", one of the most stable climate periods in history.

Plimer said some astronomers predict we are headed for a new cooling period.

Plimer said there is a division between those scientists who sit in front of super computers and push piles of data into the mathematical models that drive the theory of climate change, and those who take measurements in the field.

We are not sceptical enough about the data. For instance, Plimer cited differences between results from temperature measuring stations in urban and rural areas. Those in urbanised Chicago, Berkeley, New York, and so on, show temperature rises over the past 150 years, whereas those in the rural US, in Houlton, Albany and Harrisburg (though not Death Valley, California) show equally consistent cooling. "What we're measuring is urbanisation," Plimer said.

To understand the chaotic nature of climate change, we need to consider all the inputs - cosmic radiation, sun, clouds and so on, he said.

There was much more but essentially Plimer's message is that the idea humans cause climate change has become a fundamentalist religion which is corrupting science. It is embedded with a fear of nature and embraced principally by city people who have lost touch with nature.

He likens the debate to the famous 1990s battle he had in the Federal Court, where he accused an elder of The Hills Bible Church in Baulkham Hills of breaching Australia's Trade Practices Act by claiming to have found scientific evidence of Noah's Ark in Turkey.

Plimer says creationists and climate alarmists are quite similar in that "we're dealing with dogma and people who, when challenged, become quite vicious and irrational".

Human-caused climate change is being "promoted with religious zeal ... there are fundamentalist organisations which will do anything to silence critics. They have their holy books, their prophet [is] Al Gore. And they are promoting a story which is frightening us witless [using] guilt [and urging] penance."

It is difficult for non-scientists to engage in the debate over what causes climate change and whether or not it can be stopped by new taxes and slower growth, because dissenting voices are shouted down by true believers in the scientific community who claim they alone have the authority to speak.

Quadrant is under fire for publishing articles by sceptics but, as its editor, Keith Windschuttle, said on Monday night, "People who are really confident [of their facts] relish debate."

In any case, ordinary people already have suspicions. The zealotry and one-sidedness of the debate alarmed an 81-year-old Seven Hills pensioner, Denys Clarke, so much that last month, at his own expense, he hired the ballroom at the Blacktown Workers Club for two public forums, titled *The Truth About Climate Change*. He invited a climate sceptic, the James Cook University professor Bob Carter, a geologist, to speak. More than 300 people attended, some from as far away as Nowra.

Carter, like Plimer and Klaus, has come in for his fair share of vilification. But as Clarke proves, you can't stop people thinking. Yet.

The Corner

[The Great Acorn Mystery](#) [John J. Miller]

Today's *Wash Post* has a [story on acorns](#)—or rather the lack of them. Apparently oaks in the region aren't producing very many this year:

The idea seemed too crazy to Rod Simmons, a measured, careful field botanist. Naturalists in Arlington County couldn't find any acorns. None. No hickory nuts, either. Then he went out to look for himself. He came up with nothing. Nothing crunched underfoot. Nothing hit him on the head. ...

"I'm used to seeing so many acorns around and out in the field, it's something I just didn't believe," he said. "But this is not just not a good year for oaks. It's a zero year. There's zero production. I've never seen anything like this before."

Sort of interesting, but not a matter of grave concern unless you're squirrel. Oaks live a long time. They can deal with a low-acorn year. But this is a newspaper story about an environmental quirk. And so...

Wait for it...

Wait for it...

Yes! Paragraph #11:

You have to wonder, is it global warming?

News Biscuit

[Unemployment to be tackled with 'Guide Blokes for the Blind'](#)



Work and Pensions secretary James Purnell has today announced new plans to tackle rising jobless figures by replacing working dogs with the long term unemployed.

Thousands of dogs are currently employed in the UK in occupations as varied as guide dogs for the blind, hearing dogs for the deaf, police dogs, drug sniffer dogs and sheep dogs. 'These are all jobs that could easily be done by men and women currently out of work, if they were given the right training,' claimed Purnell.

The move has already proved to be popular with the public. 'These mutts are in our country taking all our jobs,' said one man outside Dagenham Job Centre. 'My mate went for a job as a sheep-bloke but they gave it to some Border Collie who was willing to work for a Bonio and can of Pedigree Chum. How can we compete against that? It's about time someone did something about it.'

The Conservatives have however criticized the proposals, saying 'This isn't going to solve unemployment. Dogs will be unemployed instead. The Government should stop trying to fiddle the figures and include dogs from the unemployed total.'

A pilot scheme to train humans to do traditional canine tasks has already been trialled in Scotland. In Glasgow blind people can be seen being led by young trainees wearing day-glo jackets and harnesses, although there have been reports of some problems. One so called 'Guide Bloke' waited to cross the road and then shouted 'Now, if we're quick!' tugging his master between the speeding cars, weaving between the lanes and then clambering over the barrier in the middle of the central reservation.

Another trainee Hugh Brown explained how he had been taught how to sniff passengers at Glasgow airport to see if they were carrying drugs. 'I can't tell the difference between cannabis and cheese and onion crisps at the moment but I'm sure I'll get the hang of it,' he said. 'Mind you, when my handlers did finally find some cocaine, I had a really good sniff. To be honest the rest of the day is a bit of a blur...'





