

The New Hampshire Gazette

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The Fortnightly Rant

How We Lost The Same War Twice

It's coming. A week from next Wednesday it will be here. This time we know it's coming. But, we're no more ready for the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive than we were for the real thing.

Oh, the TV news people might have something prepared for the occasion. They do those things in their sleep: a dramatic logo ginned up by the graphics department, a few minutes worth of talking heads displaying a simulacrum of deep concern while old footage runs behind them.

Don't expect much from the White House. If President Bone Spur can let a whole day pass without mentioning a false alarm about a nuclear missile attack on Hawaii, he's hardly likely to have prepared any remarks commemorating a real fight he dodged in his youth.

At the Pentagon, generals will be standing carefully on that part of the rug under which their predecessors swept their deeds.

As for the nation as a whole ... [cue the needle scratch]. Our apologies: due to advanced age, we sometimes forget that concepts familiar to us may be quaint to others. Can we pretend, though, for the purposes of this essay, that such a phrase still has some meaning?

There are a number of reasons why it is so hard to imagine this nation uniting behind a meaningful commemoration of Tet—the day that the truth of the Vietnam War finally became undeniable.

Mainly, it's because so much time and effort was put into making that truth disappear.

But, you may say, what about “the truth will out?”

Yes, yes, it will.

When the day comes, a few hundred old men will gather—they know where—and they'll tell the truth to each other. And even some of them will have it wrong.

As the sprawling capitol of a kleptocratic puppet government which was the successor to nearly a century of French colonial rule, Saigon before Tet was, quite naturally, decadent and depraved. Its main streets were a seething mass of humanity, spilling over with city dwellers and refugees from the countryside, flowing like some viscous liquid. For Vietnam, though, it was relatively peaceful. Only occasionally would a Honda-riding cowboy take a pot-shot with a pistol at a U.S. officer or toss a grenade at some GI's foolishly bunched up at a bus stop.

That city vanished in an instant on the morning of January 31, 1968.

If people remember Tet today, they may recall that a small team of Viet Cong sappers breached the outer wall of the U.S. Embassy and traded gunshots with diplomats. That was just the highlight reel, though—one of half a dozen similar attacks on particularly high profile targets across the city. Altogether, Viet Cong from 35 battalions appeared like mushrooms after rain and turned much of Saigon into a battlefield.

At the same time, 400 miles away at the northern extremity of the fictitious state, ten battalions of the People's Army captured the ancient, walled Imperial City of Huế, giving them a nearly-impenetrable defensible position.

In fact, the length and breadth of the country—which, according to a mountain of statistical data, had been successfully “pacified” by half a million U.S. troops—was in utter chaos. Altogether, 80,000 North Vietnamese regulars and Viet Cong had attacked 100 towns and cities.

Intense fighting in Saigon lasted more than a week, and mop-up operations went on for a month. In Huế, it took a full month of all-out effort by the Marines, the 1st Caval-



ry, and ARVN [South Vietnamese] troops to clear the city.

Through it all, General William Westmoreland, the U.S. Commander, didn't skip a beat—his lying went on uninterrupted. Don North, an ABC correspondent, wrote, “I was personally aware of General Westmoreland's fabrications starting with his announcement at a Saigon news conference on Jan. 31, that Huế had been recaptured and NVA soldiers forced out.”

The North Vietnamese objective for the Tet Offensive had been to inspire a General Uprising throughout the South. By those terms it was a complete failure. It was probably the most successful complete failure in military history, though.

Several years of slowly escalating drip, drip, drip, had failed to impress upon Americans at home that, left to its own devices, this war was going to go on forever. As it turned out, a sudden, dramatic bloodbath was all it took to nudge public opinion

in the direction of “win or get out.”

Tet, in effect, stamped a shelf-life on the illusion that perhaps some kind of victory was possible. Two more waves of attacks in May pretty well sealed the deal.

It was during this period that the carnage reached its peak, with hundreds of Americans dying every week. That the war dragged on for years was not an indication of public support, but a condemnation of our politics and our politicians.

Once all the troops were home who were coming home, there was finally a broad consensus about the war: let's sure as hell not do *that* again. Polls taken in the late 70s and early 80s revealed that two-thirds to three-quarters of Americans believed that the war had been a mistake, wrong, immoral, or all of the above. It would have been a great time for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Instead, we got Ronald Reagan. As a WW II veteran of Hollywood sound stages, he despised the notion that America's military might be subject to constraint.

After an attempt at rebranding the Vietnam War as a “noble cause” fell as flat as New Coke, The Gipper tried a bank shot. Suddenly Vietnam veterans were his darlings.

After a decade of being looked at askance, this often obstreperous cohort were being treated with a little dignity. Some of them embraced that change without question, raising the possibility that their opinion of the war improved a bit, too.

Civilians were taught to separate the war from the warrior. In practice, the reconciliation was to some degree a package deal. It's not easy to “support the troops” while opposing the war to which they're heading.

For those who remember it, it's sobering to think that a mistake—hell, a crime—so terrible could be papered over with lies and smiles.

The Alleged News®

Battle of the Titans: the Stock Exchange vs. the Arc of Justice

The New York Stock Exchange took Monday off, ostensibly so that Wall Street traders might take time out to honor the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Perhaps we are unduly jaded, but we suspect that their worship of Mammon just continued in other venues. Their religion no longer requires any particular edifice, since capitalism, through globalism, has made the whole world into Mammon's Temple.

The Dow-Jones Industrial Average has risen about 6,000 points over the past year—1,000 points in the last week alone. According to our ~~de facto national religion~~ free market theory, then, the value of companies traded on the Stock Exchange has increased by about 23 percent during the alleged Presidency of Donald J. Trump, Jr.

Trump supporters might argue that this is evidence of the President's Midas touch. If he has that magical ability, it operates in a mysterious way: it seems to work when he does not. On average, every fourth day he has been in office, our Chief Executive has found the time to play golf at one or another of his various Versailles.

On Monday, for example—again, Martin Luther King Jr. Day—he golfed at Mar-a-Lago while the Vice President and the Secretary of the Interior laid a wreath at the King memorial. Perhaps in light of his recent and blatantly racist remark about Haiti and Africa being “sh_ tholes,” few saw fit to complain about his absence from a ceremony honoring the civil rights leader.

Similarly, on Saturday, the President's Twitter account was unchar-

acteristically silent during the 38 minute period when the State of Hawaii was under an official warning which said, “BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.” (Innumerable critics have faulted Hawaiian officials for causing unnecessary alarm; few seem to have noticed their sober restraint in eschewing the use of exclamation points.)

At press time, we can report that Hawaii has not, to date, been attacked by any ICBMs. A technician in Hawaii appears to have accidentally selected the wrong item from a two-item, pull-down menu on a computer screen, as one does.

Despite his long-running Twitter feud with the number one suspect in the event of an ICBM aimed at Ha-

waii, the person currently holding the office which formerly represented the *de facto* leadership of the Free World ignored the alarm.

Instead, he issued a tweet about *Fire and Fury*, a new book by Michael Wolff, which purports to reveal that West Wing insiders hold approximately the same view of the President's abilities as do his most outspoken critics.

With our economy now based on consumption, and consumption based on consumer confidence, it seems pretty clear, one-quarter of the way through the Trump administration, that, to ensure a sound economy, the President should spend the remaining three-quarters of it at Mar-a-Lago, eating meatloaf and chocolate cake.

Meanwhile, the Wall Street wizards can continue driving up the

value of the U.S. economy. After all, the sky's the limit, right? Who knows how much prosperity they can create? Granted, 57 percent of Americans couldn't currently cover an unexpected bill of \$500. But, eventually, if the stock market keeps going up and up, sooner or later something is bound to trickle down.

Capitalism is all about growth, and there's plenty of room to grow. Companies we think of today as giants are puny in historical perspective. Combine the valuation of 20 of our mightiest modern companies—including Apple, Google, Amazon, Walmart, and Exxon Mobil—and you come up with \$7.9 trillion.

A single company was once worth that much, 380 years ago.

The Alleged News®

to page two

The Alleged News®

from page one

True, tulips are no longer a popular vehicle for investment. The principle still holds, though: things are worth whatever people are willing to pay for them. At least, until they're not.

As the rising prices of old-fashioned stocks gladden the generally geriatric hearts of those who own them, many tech-savvy Millennials, who apparently never heard of Tulipmania, are busily counting their Bitcoin chickens.

One year ago a single Bitcoin was said to be worth \$830. On Monday—Martin Luther King Jr. Day—that same invisible, electronic entity was allegedly worth about \$19,000.

Why did its value increase by a factor of 23? Capitalism, we suppose. Thanks to the strength of our all-volunteer armed forces, the United States of America is able to provide a safe space for a free market in which something is worth whatever a willing buyer will pay a willing seller.

You can argue with their choices all you want—tulips, electrons, whatever—but if they'll pay for it,

that means it's worth it, until it isn't. Its global hegemony notwithstanding, capitalism does have its occasional critic.

For example, on Monday, CNN had the gall to report that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a socialist—which, in fact, he was. As early as July 18, 1952, he wrote to Coretta Scott, "I imagine you already know that I am much more socialistic in my economic theory than capitalistic. And yet I am not so opposed to capitalism that I have failed to see its relative merits. It started out with a noble and high motive, viz, to block the trade monopolies of nobles; but, like most human systems, it fell victim to the very thing it was revolting against. So today capitalism has outlived its usefulness. It has brought about a system that takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes."

What he wrote in private, King also said in public. Speaking to the Negro American Labor Council in 1961, he said, "Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all God's children."

CNN's mention of King's social-



Visible, material progress is being made at the Press Room, albeit in the form of destruction. It would be hard to say which project's completion is more anticipated: this venerable institution or the new Sarah Mildred Long Bridge. We know where we stand: after all, there are other bridges.

ism caused considerable consternation among conservatives. Here they had invested all those years in learning to grudgingly accept the man, if only on the surface. Now they're handed a legitimate reason to hate him, and they don't know how to handle it. It must be both infuriating and confusing.

That may tempt liberals to feel a little bit smug. They might want to recall how, back in the day, Democrats turned their backs on Dr. King after he spoke on April 4, 1967 against the Vietnam War.

Proof You're In New England

Last Saturday morning at 3:56 a.m., after a rather rigorous cold spell lasting nearly a fortnight, the mercury made it all the way up to 59° Fahrenheit (the scale by which all true Americans read the temperature).

The next morning it had dropped to 0° by 6:56 a.m.

That is all.

Ever Vigilant: The Flag Police

The Flag Police were saddened but not surprised when a shuttle boat to an offshore Florida casino burned to the waterline recently, with the loss of one life.

Any boat with a U.S. flag mounted on the bow is, *ipso facto*, a boat being operated improperly.



Meanwhile, closer to Precinct Headquarters, an enterprising Newington gun manufacturer has found a novel way to violate the Flag Code.

On Sunday, the *Union Leader* gleefully touted this development: "A new Sig Sauer handgun the company says honors veterans, first

responders and the American flag, comes with 'STAND' laser-engraved at the business end to 'inspire patriotism,' the firearms manufacturer says."



Marketing blather on the manufacturer's website claims that by spending about \$850 or so on this 9mm "special commemorative edition," the customer will "Show ... unwavering support for the flag and for America's National Anthem."

Raffi, who goes by @nbanyak on Twitter and says he lives in Hanover, N.H., took a somewhat less positive view of the product: "Wow, a gun made in retaliation for those who

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kneel against oppression.”

Patrick Blanchfield was similarly unimpressed, tweeting, “in so many words: ‘Sometimes you have to Stand Your Ground against people who won’t Stand for what you want.’”

As for the Flag Police, they’re busting Sig Sauer for violation of the Flag Code.

Balfour at 100

On November 2, 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, a public statement which said that “His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people ... it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine ...” At that time, Jewish people made up about five percent of Palestine, which had been part of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

Complications ensued.

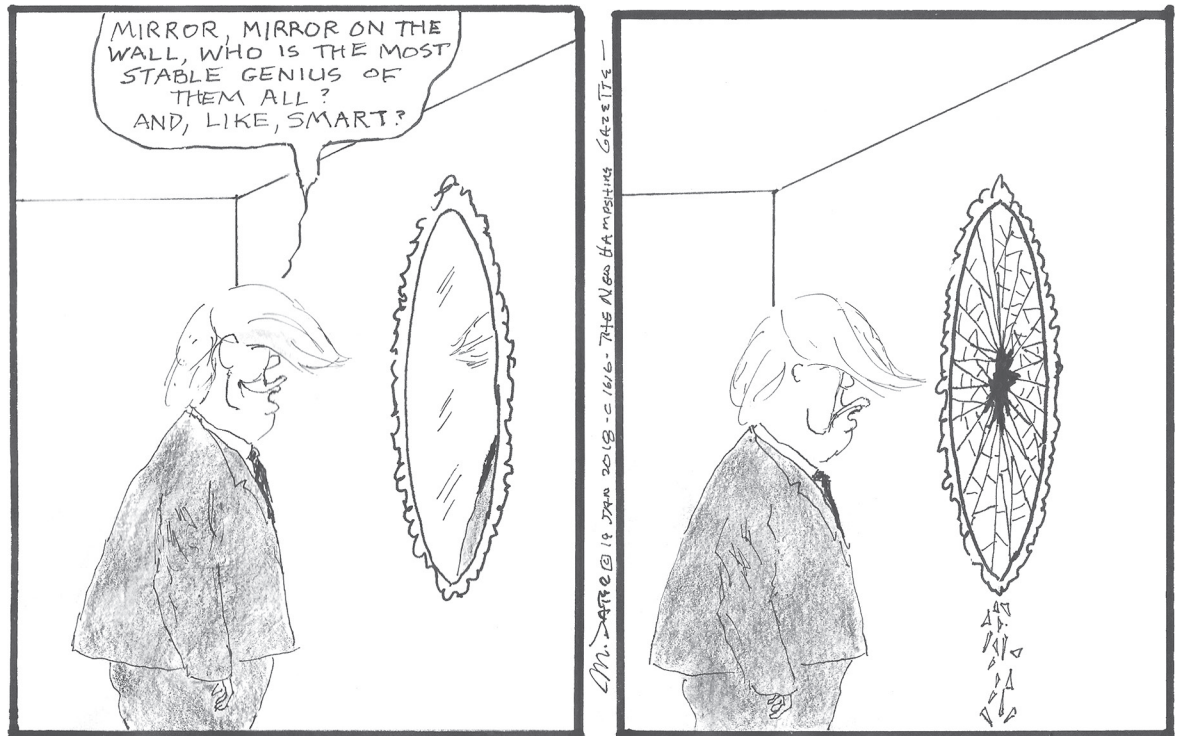
On Thursday, January 25th, Jeff Klein will present “Balfour at 100: A Century of Colonialism in the Middle East,” at the Portsmouth Public Library, in the Levenson Room.

According to the sponsors, Seacoast Peace Response, Palestine Education Network, and Water Justice in Palestine, Klein has gathered a wide range of resources and formed a revealing perspective on the 20th Century political Dynamics in Europe that enabled the formation of Israel. His presentation helps form an understanding of the way issues at play in the region today have come to be and how tensions can be reduced.

The program will begin at 7:00 p.m. For more information contact Sandra Yarne at skyarne@yahoo.com, or call (603) 446-2424

Another Victory at Sanders Poynt (sic?)

Rye resident Bob Jesurum is on a roll, recently racking up another victory over one of the Seacoast’s favorite trolls.



Having defeated William “Bill” Binnie in an epic legal battle over public access to the beach at Little Harbor, Jesurum again sued the former plastic coathanger magnate, seeking the restoration of the sign seen here.

On January 13th, Jesurum sent out this photo [severely cropped by us] and the following message: “On a balmy January morning, on my usual walk, noticed that the historic marker has been temporarily restored. They (the Town? or WBTSCC?) shortened the post in order to place it in a concrete bucket. I assume that they will replace the post when they do a permanent restoration.”

“Thank you, Judge Wageling.”

On behalf of our readers, thank you, Mr. Jesurum.

Apparently the only battle remaining in the War of Sanders Poynt (sic?) is over how to spell the name. Frankly, we’re confused.



Class War Takes to the Airwaves

The urge of the well-heeled to appropriate that which belongs to the rest of us seems to know no bounds. Recently it’s been manifesting itself on the local airwaves.

According to WSCA-LP board member Rick Pickford, the station’s signal is being crushed by a translator station in Amesbury owned by Bloomberg Radio.

Licensed by the FCC to operate at 106.1 on the FM dial, WSCA, broadcasting since 2004, was created in an act of defiance, according to its Wikipedia entry.

“Judd Gregg, then-senator and former governor of New Hampshire, led the opposition to the U.S. Federal Communications Commission’s plans to license low-power radio stations, most notably by sponsoring the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act. Prometheus Technical Director Pete Tridish said the group ‘wanted to help build a station right in the state of the man in the Senate, Senator Judd Gregg, who has done the most to oppose community radio.’ Gregg’s senatorial challenger, Doris ‘Granny D’ Haddock, was invited to speak at the barnraising.”

While it is impossible for us to know whether the world’s 10th

richest man is intentionally silencing the voice of our community, or doing it accidentally as part of his overall effort to work his way up to 9th place, it would not be entirely outlandish to suggest the possibility of revenge as a motive. At one time both Bloomberg and Gregg were co-chairs of the plutocrat-friendly pressure group Fix the Debt. Gregg remains a co-chair [when he’s not busy knocking down the big bucks at Goldman Sachs]. Bloomberg is still a member.

The problem has existed for years but was exacerbated when Bloomberg bought and powered-up a Boston antenna. That made WNBP, a local station, technically untenable. The owner sold the Amesbury translator to Bloomberg, which promptly installed a far more powerful antenna in Amesbury, the one that’s causing the trouble.

WSCA will soon be filing Listener Complaint Forms for Signal Interference with the FCC. The form can be found online at wscaf.org/ signal/.

This will take money. Send checks to: WSCA, 909 Islington St., Portsmouth, N.H.

If you can’t pick up a clear signal, listen online at wscaf.org.



Once again on Sunday, despite temperatures around 20°, Market Square provided proof that, despite the efforts of certain parties, participatory democracy is not dead yet. Messages being conveyed included, “Strong Voting Rights Protect Our Democracy,” “The Real Fraud: Voter Suppression Laws, Gerrymandering, Electronic Ballots,” “Mr. Trump: White House Not = Whites Only,” “Humankind — Be Both — Save DACA,” “Money Out Of Politics,” “Collusion With Russia — We Demand A Full & Impartial Investigation,” “Climate Change Just Ruined Your [image of Trump] Tee Time,” “Black Lives Matter [four signs],” “Net Neutrality Gone,” “Honk For Civil Rights,” “Join Us Every Sunday For Civil Rights Sundays,” and “Womens March 2018 Jan 20th, 1-3 P.M.”

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Where Will We Be on December 31, 2018?

To the Editor:

With the major electronic and print media journalism engaged in tabloid type journalism on the level of the old *National Enquirer*, the *New Hampshire Gazette* serves as an escape into the world of real journalism where real problems are discussed and addressed.

Furthermore, it is to their credit that the writers do mention the Democrats as well as the Republicans for contributing to the sad state of affairs in America.

But, I do not agree with many of their conclusions with regard to the economy. The economic failures are not because of capitalism. The failures are because capitalism was replaced by central planning that is now in the hands of The Federal Reserve, and as history has taught us no centrally planned economy has survived, or produced the wealth that capitalist economies have.

The collapse of the economy in 2008 would have destroyed the policies set in motion by Greenspan and Bernacke which by decriminalizing regulations permitted gigantic bubbles to emerge in the housing markets, and with hedge funds. Had the banks and Wall Street not been bailed out to the tune of billions of dollars the economy would have recovered on its own and capital markets would have returned to more rational price discovery.

The bailouts by the Federal Reserve amounted to printing and funneling money to the same criminals and scoundrels that caused the crash. Furthermore, artificially low interest rates re-inflated the bubbles in the housing, financial, and bond markets to a level beyond that of the 2008 crash. In essence it amounted to transferring billions of dollars of zero interest money to privileged borrowers. This money funded the carry trade and was used for leveraged buy outs and ultimate destruction of companies and their labor force. In addition it permitted stock buybacks that artificially drove the stock market to extreme values with most stocks ending up in the portfolios of the company executives.

Meanwhile, credit card rates stayed

high and loans to the poor through payday loans were at rates as high as five hundred percent and beyond. Many lost their homes to foreclosure. No new plants were built, no new workers were hired, and no new manufacturing resulted.

With Trump making major mistakes in foreign policy while abandoning most of his platform in that regard and becoming a tool of the neocons we hope that a nuclear war is not in our future. But, what is definitely in our future is an economic collapse brought about by the policies of the Federal Reserve and I will venture to state that 2018 is the year when it will occur. The bubbles in the stock market, the bond market, the housing market, and Bitcoin will collapse. This time there can be no bailout.

Happy New Year.

John Dente

Wilmington, Del.

John:

A Happy New Year to you, sir. We're grateful to have letter writers such as yourself: unafraid of a robust dialogue.

The Editor

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The Longest Book Ever Written?

To the Editor:

Another week, and another chapter is added to the book; *The Many (and Continuing) Lies of Donald Trump*. The way things are going, this book may be the longest ever written.

Mr. Trump has cancelled his planned visit to England, blaming the cancellation on President Obama and the location of the new American Embassy in London. The fact that President George W. Bush made the decision to move the embassy in 2008 was never mentioned by Trump. The fact that Trump has totally alienated the English with his actions, and was very unwelcome by the people of England was the real reason. The Prime Minister condemned Trump's re-tweeting some inflammatory anti-Muslim video's, and he was further criticized for the derogatory comments he made about the Mayor of London following a terrorist attack there. Trump knew he would have faced large crowds protesting his visit



which would have further damaged our already tenuous relationship with the British Government, not to mention his bigly sensitive ego.

In another striking display of racism and disgraceful behavior, during an immigration policy meeting with Congressional leaders, Trump referred to certain African Nations and Haiti as "shithole" nations. Of course, in true Trump fashion, he has denied making such comments, although they were verified by Senators Graham and Durbin.

While Trump's lies are bad enough, it is the behavior that necessitates his lies that are the larger problem. His lies continue to diminish any bit of credibility and trust people can place in anything Trump says, which alone damages America. However it is his actions that continue to greatly harm America diplomatically, economically, and politically on a global level. He has severely weakened our vital Trans Atlantic Alliance, which has served America and our allies well for over seventy years. When the President of the United States cannot make a friendly visit to England, our longest and strongest ally, something very serious is happening. When you alienate many African nations with racist and derogatory comments, you weaken our economic and political leverage in those nations. As a result, China will gain increased economic leverage and power in Africa, taking full advantage of Trump's ignorance.

Stay tuned next week for another parade of lies, denials, and embarrassments from Mr. Trump to add to our rapidly expanding manuscript.

Rich DiPentima

Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:

With luck, the publisher of the putative book to which you refer will have reason to cancel its publication.

The Editor

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The Best of All Possible Tax Cuts

To the Editor:

Americans could almost be excused for believing the lie that the Trump tax cuts would harm poor and middle income Americans because Democrat politicians and the main stream media have been lying about it so persistently, enthusiastically, and authoritatively. But rational Americans have learned to question everything that Democrats, including most of the main stream media, say.

The Trump tax cut will benefit poor and middle income Americans; even the *Washington Post* admits that about 8 in every 10 Americans will see a tax cut next year. Working Americans should see the benefit in their February paychecks. Only about five percent of Americans, almost exclusively people with incomes in the top 10 to 15 percent, will have a tax increase.

The standard deductions and child tax credits are greatly increased. For many Americans, perhaps millions, tax preparation will be greatly simplified so they will save hours of labor and frustration and can avoid hiring tax preparation help.

The corporate tax changes should be even more beneficial than the personal income tax changes; they improve the U.S. business environment, slowing or stopping the movement of jobs overseas, instigating a new wave of foreign and domestic investment in the U.S., increasing profits which benefit investors and worker retirement plans, and most importantly by creating more and better jobs for U.S. workers.

Democrat Senator Schumer said the corporate benefits will only go to the CEOs and not to workers, but he lies. Already many companies, even before getting the benefit from the tax cuts, have promised bonuses, increased wages, increased investment, and other

increased spending to benefit workers all because of the Trump tax cuts. *E.g.*, AT&T promised \$1,000 bonuses to over 200,000 employees and a new \$1,000,000,000 investment in the U.S. which will grow jobs.

Democrat Nancy Pelosi called the Trump tax cut "Armageddon," which it should be for Democrats because all Democrat politicians voted against reducing taxes, against simplifying tax preparation, and against creating an economic environment that will provide more and better jobs for American workers.

Republicans want everyone to prosper, to have challenging and rewarding jobs, and more enjoyable lives. But Democrat politicians' power depends on having millions of poor and dependent people; Democrat politicians' greed for power and wealth makes them vote against policies that help people succeed and prosper. And that's why only Republican Senators and Congressmen voted for the Trump tax cuts, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that President Trump signed before Christmas, which have already begun making Americans more prosperous, making their lives more enjoyable, and making their futures brighter.

Don Ewing

Meredith, N.H.

Don:

Your letters are like gold to us. Just as gold is nearly impervious to chemical assault, your letters appear impervious to facts. Gold is dense, soft, malleable, and ductile; thus, it can assume almost any shape imaginable. Likewise your letters can twist reason into the most improbable shapes, to provide support for the Right Wing's looniest positions.

Perhaps a few lower-income earners may see some slight shaving of their tax obligations. Those are bought at the cost of

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— Herbert Bayard Swope (1882-1958)
editor, journalist

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huge gifts to the “deserving rich,” thereby starving the government of desperately needed funds which would otherwise have enriched the lives of all.

The Editor

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Tweets of the POTUS
To the Editor:
Sometimes they are ridiculous, sometimes self-contradictory. Sometimes they are dishonest, sometimes dangerously provocative. Rants of a cranky angryman, the tweets of the POTUS are not government policy. Policy goes through official government channels. POTUS tweets are denied or dismissed by the White House spokesperson whenever they are challenged or criticized.

The media does disservice to the country when it gives POTUS tweets attention and reports them as news. They are word noise, nothing more.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.
Bruce:
Would that Trump communicated only by tweet, and that all said tweets were universally ignored.

The Editor

=====
Dr. Kulla on Opioids, Part Deux
To the Editor:
This is my second article on opioids. The first one pertained to older adults and appeared on July 23, 2017.

Back in the 1960's society viewed heroin (opioid) junkies with disdain. Film footage depicted addicts cooking heroin in a rusty spoon and using dirty needles to inject in their quivering bodies. High school students were shown films of heroin addicts strapped to gurneys twisting in agony as they went through the rigors of withdrawal.

Fast forward to the early 1990s. There was a resurgence of addiction

and overdose deaths as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved an opioid drug that was unjustly marketed to doctors as a relatively “safe” pain reliever—OxyContin. A revolving door between pharmaceutical companies and the FDA is/was taking place, which was duly exposed by *Life Extension* magazine in the 1980s and more recently by the *Washington Post* and *60 Minutes*.

The FDA reviewed Perdue Pharma's clinical studies on OxyContin, a highly addictive opioid drug, and approved it. The FDA was told that OxyContin, which is similar in structure and function to heroin and other opioids, was a time-release tablet and this posed a lower threat of abuse and addiction. As a result, the groundwork was laid by the federal government's inefficient and inept oversight.

Upon approval of OxyContin, Perdue Pharma aggressively and fraudulently targeted primary care doctors because they had little training in severe pain management or in recognizing signs of drug abuse. Next, Perdue Pharma promoted the idea that it was an acceptable solution for almost any type of pain. Consequently, we witnessed skyrocketing rates of addiction which has severely worsened in recent years.

Eventually, Purdue Pharma and three executives pleaded guilty to criminal charges for intentionally lying about the addictive risks of OxyContin. They were charged with \$634 million in fines. The executives responsible received no prison time and the company was allowed to continue selling different versions of OxyContin containing drugs, including fentanyl (much more powerful than heroin), which tore through American communities with increased fatalities by 72 percent in a single year from 2014

2015.

The bleak news was that over 200,000 lost lives were caused by opioid drugs up to and including 2016 that never should have been green lighted for wide-spread use. These deaths were deemed to be grossly underestimated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Victims range from small town and suburban young people, moms and dads, to celebrities like the musician Prince to the actor, Philip Seymour Hoffman. Left behind are shattered lives and broken families in the worst narcotic crisis in American history.

When a person takes these dangerous drugs, it quickly fills opioid receptors in the brain, relieving pain and inducing calmness and euphoria in many. Continued opioid use desensitizes these receptors, often necessitating stronger doses.

Some of the opioid receptors can become re-sensitized within days or weeks after detox, enabling the opioid user to regain a sense of normalcy. More often though, profound and long-lasting changes occur in the brain with dire consequences. Restlessness and intense agitation along with physical and mental cravings for a “fix” eventuates which can ignite another vicious addiction cycle. Tragically, 90 percent of those in recovery experience relapse. The final exit for many is recovery or death.

In 2017, several states sued pharmaceutical companies for downplaying the dangers of opioids and for deceptive marketing. These states have come up against an entrenched and highly powerful pharmaceutical lobby that roll back laws that make it easier to overprescribe, increase distribution and be more charitable to manufacturers and distributors in regard to accountability.

A few parents and activists have tried to inject some sense into opioid laws, but tragically, they are no match

for the lobbyists.

I wish I could offer some encouragement for readers, in the face of around 100 folk still succumbing to this scourge daily. I can only say that I strongly advocate education over incarceration in the almost 40-years-unsuccessful “war on drugs.” Educating school children about the mechanisms of opioid dependence and withdrawal should go a long way to dissuade them from considering opioids. Finally, opioids need to regain the stigma they had in the 1960/1970s, but this time the blame must be squarely affixed onto the culprits.

Michael Kulla, Ph.D.
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

=====
Frog Horn
To the Editor:
The propaganda mill at the NRA has taken a giant leap forward with a series of highly provocative video ads designed to escalate division and revolutionary fervor.

I recommend doing a Google search for “NRA ads” to check these ads out. You'll likely find some of them exceptionally chilling because they appear to invite neighbor-on-neighbor violence between Main Street Americans—echoes of life in Germany and Italy in a bygone day.

For example, in one ad, alt-right hate-radio host and NRA spokesperson Dana Loesch proclaims that America's true patriots are under assault by corrupt government officials and free-loading liberals who are out to steal their lunch. Moreover, ever since Hillary lost the election, these members of “the resistance” have grown blind with rage and will stop at nothing to get revenge. They are violent, dangerous, and must be suppressed with an iron fist.

It's been said, if you place a frog in a pot of water and heat it up gradually, the frog will never notice he's being cooked. Alt-right propaganda such as this works much the same way. Little by little, things that were once unthinkable and extreme become plausible. Perhaps it's no mistake that a frog is the official mascot of America's white supremacy movement.

Needless to say, these ads are destructive, unless you happen to be in the business of manufacturing and selling guns. And, they're destructive unless you're in the business of selling the NRA's \$850 “Carry Guard” program. Carry Guard teaches America's legions of the paranoid how to use their guns properly while wallowing in a sea of angry liberals, corrupt officials, and marauding demonstrators. If you pass the course, you even qualify to purchase liability insurance to cover any damage you might cause.

The Department of Homeland Security tells us: “If you see something, say something.” The NRA tells us: “If you see something, shoot it.” They'll even instruct you on how to get away with it, and sell you liability insurance in the event you don't!

America—what a country!
Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.
Rick:
Thanks for the analysis. On some topics, our brain just freezes up.

The Editor

=====
This Year in Jerusalem
To the editor:
I never fully understood the plight of the Jews in Israel until I heard Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York City, spell it out on a talk radio show. Koch simply said, “Israel is surrounded by millions of people who want to kill them.”

Tragically, Jerusalem is once again at the center of political and international debate.

Nobel prize-winning author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel can tell you about Jerusalem and what it means to the Jewish people. Wiesel said, “Jerusalem is above politics. It is mentioned more than six hundred times in Scripture—and not a single time in the Koran. Its presence in Jewish history is overwhelming. There is no more moving prayer in Jewish history than the one expressing our yearning to return to Jerusalem. To many theologians, it *is* Jewish history.

Hate Mail, &c.
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The Northcountry Chronicle

Reenacting 1960

by William Marvel

My mother was the liberal in our house. She was born into a working-class Irish family that voted Democratic at least from the end of the Populist movement of the 1890s. Her brothers had all belonged to railroad or industrial unions. It was because of her that the Boston *Globe* started coming to the house in 1960.

My father's ancestors, meanwhile, had been Democrats in Delaware when that was the conservative party, long before the Civil War. My grandfather carried those inherited principles of self-sufficiency with him when he left the family farm in southern Delaware to work his way through college and medical school, and he passed his political tenets on to his sons. They both pursued careers in the Navy, which only reinforced the conservative doctrine they had learned at home.

It was because of my father that we got a subscription to the *Union Leader*—about the same time the *Globe* began to show up. He would read it when he got home from

work, afterward tossing it on the other side of the kitchen table for my mother, who mostly used it to line the birdcage. She would leave the *Globe* on his side of the table, and he would throw it in the kindling box.

Early recollections of them discussing political topics involved jovial repartee about Adlai Stevenson and Dwight Eisenhower, but that disappeared in 1960. The disparity between the *Globe* and the *Union Leader* was not then apparent to me. I knew only that two men were vying for the White House, and one of them was Irish, which was always considered a good recommendation in my family. He came from Massachusetts, which had not yet begun to flood my town with high-maintenance colonists, and like my father he was a Navy veteran of the Pacific War, so I favored him.

My mother did, too, but my father did not. I don't know if he actually liked Nixon, or would have preferred another Republican, but it quickly became clear that he did not share the *Globe's* enthusiasm for Jack Kennedy. I do know that my momentary obsession with Kennedy's exploits in the Pacific elicited surprisingly

little interest from my father when I brought it up at the dinner table. Only after I tried for the umpteenth time to initiate a discussion about Kennedy's career as a PT boat commander did my father finally respond—merely mentioning that Nixon had been in the Navy, too.

"Sort of," mumbled my mother, after which we resumed eating in silence.

There was a lot of silence that year, interspersed with brief but sharp snarls. That was unusual, for the dinner hour usually passed with my father telling stories about people he worked with, or characters around town. My mother was always pretty voluble, too, recounting the news she had received in letters from her siblings and faraway friends, or from her weekly trips to the grocery stores. Evenings grew so still that I feared we might be suffering from financial difficulties again.

Decades passed before I deduced the dynamics of that domestic chill. Two barely compatible perspectives on the world had thrown their destinies together. My father was raised in harsh and unforgiving rural surroundings that made self-reliance a

primary virtue. In his world one did for himself and his own, while charity seemed healthiest as a personal undertaking directed at a known and acute individual need; with increasing volume and regularity, benevolence bred nothing but dependence and ingratitude. Government was something for which the citizen took a minor but important responsibility, and it was meant to provide a very few specific functions.

My mother grew up in a large family amid urban anonymity, where local political institutions perennially served as a communal safeguard against misfortune and want. Government was an external entity meant for the protection of the people individually, and from which one expected frequent assistance and a wide variety of public services. The water in one's coffee, the means of getting oneself to work—or even the work itself—were provided by one or another of many municipal departments. Sometimes so was the housing in which one lived.

My parents' personal experiences confirmed divergent worldviews that molded their contradictory opinions on politics domestic and

foreign. Within the family the potential conflict slept unnoticed. My mother indicated what she wanted, and my father provided as much as circumstances allowed, but neither seemed to demand anything that would have been obnoxious to the other. Only in the hypothetical discourse of a turbulent presidential campaign did their dueling visions collide, and in that artificially antagonistic forum the system of mutual tolerance and accommodation broke down. The election of 1960 seemed the worst example of that phenomenon to me because it was the first time I detected a serious rift in my universe.

In the exaggerated angst of pre-adolescence I imagined the family falling apart over it, and watching my world crumble. That didn't happen, but the convivial political repartee that regulated potential discord never resurfaced. The humorless, rancorous, demanding constituencies of today evoke memories of those contentious months in 1960, again suggesting the possibility of catastrophic institutional dissolution.

=====

from page five

It belongs to the Jewish people and is much more than a city ... "Jerusalem is the heart of our heart, the soul of our soul."

Let Jerusalem be the capital of Israel.

Let Jerusalem be the place where all faiths will be welcome to come and pray in peace.

John Meinhold
Portsmouth, N.H.

John:

As soon as you grant one people the right to something because their religion says it's theirs, you open the floodgate. For decades, the U.S. has had a two-faced policy on this issue. In general,



such policies are bad. Better to be two-faced, though, than to ram a bigoted and destructive policy down the world's throat—to borrow a metaphor of which the Right Wing can't get enough.

The Editor

=====

Hey Ryan: Hands Off Social Security!

To the Editor:

When President Franklin [D.] Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law in 1935, he proudly proclaimed, "We can never insure one hundred percent of the popu-

lation against one hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age."

Social Security, despite GOP manufactured myths and lies, has been an extremely successful government program for 83 years. Current Speaker of the House Paul Ryan can attest to what I say as he

was already the recipient of Social Security as a teen when his father passed away. Ryan was actually able to use his Social Security benefits to fully pay for his education at Miami University (a double major in economics and political science, leading to a permanent job in the government he claims to disdain).

Instead of showing gratitude for the program that helped him and ensuring the program's future viability, Speaker Ryan has made it clear that the GOP will be targeting So-

cial Security, Medicare and the safety net to pay for the deficit the GOP has deliberately created with their tax scam bill for the wealthy.

Before even thinking about it, Ryan had best heed the admonishment of his conservative folk hero, former President Ronald Reagan, who, in a 1984 presidential debate, debunked Ryan's lie with his pronouncement: "Social Security, let's lay it to rest once and for all ... Social Security has nothing to do with the deficit. Social Security is totally funded by the payroll tax levied on employer and employee. If you reduce the outgo of Social Security, that money would not go into the

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Why are we giving corporate welfare to Amazon?

by Jim Hightower

Isn't it funny that right-wing politicians across the country piously rant against giving a few bucks worth of jobless benefits to the needy, then turn around and shove billions of our tax dollars into corporate welfare for the greedy?

You're right — it's not funny, but here we go again. We're present-

ly witnessing the most disgusting spectacle yet of the politico-corporate cabal extracting money from the People's wallets to enrich themselves. Amazon.com, the \$136-billion-a-year internet colossus, has haughtily initiated a sleazy, self-serving public bidding war over where it will locate its new corporate headquarters. The city and state that offer the most bribe money to this private enterprise will be "The Winner."

Uber-rich Amazon doesn't need and certainly doesn't deserve any public handout, but officials in 238 cities have prostrated themselves in front of this Amazonian welfare queen in embarrassing bids to win her nod. Amazon's arrogant executives even sent out a list of basic benefits they expect every applicant to deliver, including a "business-friendly environment and tax structure," free land, a subsidy to re-

duce its operational costs, tax breaks, relocation grants for executives and workforce, reduced utility bills, and ... oh yeah, also give us first-rate schools and an educated labor pool.

As one analyst of Amazon's bribery scheme noted, "these incentives aren't free. There's no fairy godmother paying for them." The typical result of corporate giveaways is that they cost the public more than we get back. By demanding such cor-

porate spoils, Amazon brands itself a common thief, not only taking our money, but also stealing our trust in the fairness of the system and widening inequality in our society.

To help stop this corruption, go to GoodJobsFirst.org.

—==—

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from page six

general fund to reduce the deficit. It would go into the Social Security trust fund. So Social Security has nothing to do with balancing the budget or erasing or lowering the deficit."

Let's ask Congresswoman Shea-Porter to instruct Ryan and the GOP to keep their naughty mitts off our Social Security.

Wayne H. Merritt
Dover, N.H.

Wayne:

Thank you for bringing up the details of Speaker Ryan's hypocrisy—a subject we have previously found too revolting to fully grapple with.

Immersed in it now, we wonder if there isn't a pattern to be discerned here. Every few weeks, it seems, some scientist or other comes out with a new study that seems to shed light on the roots of conservatism: the size of a person's amygdala, how a person responds to disgusting images, &c., &c. Meanwhile, we've been noticing since practically forever that there seems to be some sort of correlation between conservatism and hypocrisy.

We now begin to wonder whether we've been looking at it backwards. What if, instead of conservatives just having a more-pronounced-than-average tolerance for hypocrisy, it's the other way around?

What if people who are hypocrites at heart are for some reason drawn to conservatism? Sort of like, "All my life I've known I was two-faced—now



I've found my people!"
The Editor

—==—

Franken the Scapegoat

To the Editor:

Al Franken resigned from the Senate on January 2nd, victim of a cynical inquisition conducted by Democratic colleagues, New Hampshire's Maggie Hassan included. Accused of sexual indiscretions committed several years before he entered the Senate, Franken expressed remorse and volunteered to appear before an inquiry of the Senate's Ethics Committee. Instead, Senate Dems chose to deny Franken due process and forced his immediate resignation.

Franken's indiscretions are more akin to adolescent misbehaviors than the sordid predations of Harvey Weinstein and others. Democrats, however, chose to wrap themselves in a dubious mantle of sexual purity and declared a zero tolerance policy for alleged sexual improprieties thereby equating the behavior of Franken with Weinstein's rapacious acts.

Nobody can condone rape or violent acts of sexual aggression but a zero tolerance policy that equates rape with a clumsy kiss at the office holiday party is a zero intelligence policy. Context and motive always

matter when evaluating behavior as was clearly proven in attempts to implement zero tolerance policies during the war on drugs and the attempt to eliminate dangerous weapons from schools. Democratic leadership is well aware of this even if their more fanatic followers are not. Franken was a good man made a sacrificial lamb, part of a cynical strategy to gain separation from a Republican party that now owns the egregious sexual improprieties of Donald Trump and Roy Moore.

Democrats may gain traction with this strategy with their disciples among the coastal elites but it will not provide a solution to the fundamental problem of the abuse of power in institutional hierarchies. Nor is it likely to bear fruit in the Heartland where the Democrats have been regarded with skepticism and contempt. Until Democratic leadership formulates a strategy that addresses the economic concerns of the working class, they should not be so confidently counting their gains in the midterm 2018 elections.

Robert D. Russell, Ph.D.
Harrisburg, Pa.

—==—

Fire and Fury

To the Editor:

One of my favorite lines in *Fire*

and *Fury* describes Mr. Trump as being "less a person than a collection of terrible traits." I envision this nightmarish amorphous orange blob populated by improperly-placed commas and semicolons, and misspellings with dangling centipedal legs running amuck up and down, and tiny skinny stick-figure barbarians mischievously thrusting sparkling spears at no one in particular—all held loosely together by oozing fat cells and a desiccated ivy matrix.

William Trently
Stratham, N.H.

William:

Thanks for that vivid image—we think.

The Editor

—==—

Mr. Unreliable

To the Editor:

President Trump tried to prove he was qualified to be president by inviting the press to a meeting with Members of Congress to discuss immigration and fixing the status of the Dreamers under DACA. He stated that immigration should be about love and that he would sign legislation if both parties came to an agreement on immigration even if he did not like it. He said he would take the heat from his base to do so.

A bipartisan group of Senators

who have been working on this for months believed him. They negotiated an agreement that took into account the President's concerns and came back to the White House to explain their agreement. That is when they discovered Mr. Trump had no intention of abiding by his words from the day before. That is when he asked why the country was allowing immigrants from countries with people of color instead of countries like Norway, meaning blond haired, blue-eyed Aryan immigrants.

This must be Trump's idea of treating immigrants with love. It certainly is not an example of supporting bipartisan agreements. This was not only a display of classic racism, it also was a public warning to any country that might think of negotiating a treaty with us that this President cannot be trusted from one day to the next.

Such erratic behavior sends a message to our allies that they should not depend on this country for anything as long as he is in office. That matters as this country is dependent upon them as well. If we want sanctions against North Korea, access to bases in Turkey or intelligence about the Taliban in Pakistan we have to prove our government can be trusted. President Trump is proving that we cannot.

Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth N.H.

—==—

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