

*The Fortnightly Rant***(Bad) Business As Usual**

Ho-hum. Just another boring fortnight in the land of the brave and the home of the free. Nothing of any consequence....

Oh, wait—there was one thing.... Ah, yes, we almost forgot: the Mueller report was finally released eight days ago to Congress and the public. It nearly slipped our mind because it had been so thoroughly Barr-ed.

Move over, Thomas Bowdler (1754 – 1825). Your eponymous method of making troublesome texts innocuous enough for a child's ears has now been rendered laughably quaint by our recently-confirmed Attorney General.

Bowdler merely scissored Shakespeare on paper, clipping coarse expressions and vulgar terms from the Bard's work and handing the perforated remains to his printer. Barr presented his work product with every bit of elaborate stagecraft he could muster—equal parts P.T. Barnum and Richard Wagner. As a devotee of the Federalist Society, and a true believer in their dogma of the Unitary Executive Theory, he could do no less.

Barr performed his Prelude for an Exoneration in March. It came in the form of a four-page letter. Like a teacher blowing a pitch pipe in front of a roomful of third-graders, it set the tone for our national cadre of stenographers, laying out the approved parameters of public discussion without getting into any troublesome facts.

Then, like a baker letting his dough rise, Barr waited for nearly a month, allowing the drama to heighten—and then, predictably, deflate a bit, as the public at large wandered off to watch “Game of Thrones” or baseball.

On the day when he finally did release the report—well, 90 percent of it—he held a press conference in the morning and withheld the actual

text, to further mold debate for just one or two more hours.

Clearly Barr knows his Carlyle: “Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains.” We could expect no less from a man whose unsolicited résumé—19 single-spaced pages—presented an argument for changing the job description of the Attorney General from “nation's top prosecutor” into “defense attorney for whatever amoral slug happens to occupy the Oval Office, provided he's a Republican.”

Lipstick, however, is a notoriously ineffective pig beautifier, no matter how lavishly it is applied. Not even David Copperfield could make an official document disappear if it quotes the President saying, upon learning his election win is under investigation for Russian interference, “Oh my God. This is terrible. This is the end of my presidency. I'm f__ed.”

What if someone held a rigorous 22-month investigation, though, that revealed a mountain of rigorously-documented evidence proving what anyone with eyes could see all along—that the President of These United [Hah!] States is a lawless scoundrel—and the alleged leader of the opposing party just didn't give a %\$#@*& bleep?

Now we know. Oh, certain obstreperous Presidential candidates, and some unknown percentage of run-of-the-mill legislators, appear eager to actually do their jobs as they were originally laid out in 18th century Philadelphia. The lady with the gavel, however, having assessed the situation from her elevated position, has determined that impeachment is not worth the effort.

Down here amongst the scuffling masses, that sounds like an invitation for The Don to carry on. Some day soon we can probably expect to hear him perform his own unique



rendition of that classic line, “Nice country you got here; be a shame if anything happened to it.”

A quick scan of the horizon, though, suggests that if the the Bozo-in-Chief and the crime family formerly known as the Grand Old Party actually did set out to destroy America, we probably would not notice any change; and they'd have to look pretty hard to find anything they're not attacking already: the rule of law, the environment, the educational system, the health care system, the defense and intelligence systems, banking, our roads and bridges, national parks, OSHA, &c., &c., *ad nauseam*, you name it.

Sometimes the targets simply beggar belief. On December 22, 2017, Trump and his friends—the ones in government, not the Russian mafia—gave deserving U.S. billionaires a splendid Christmas gift: more billions, in the form of tax cuts.

Little did they know it at the time,

but that same bill jacked up taxes on an apparently less-deserving class of Americans: Gold Star families, the survivors of members of our armed forces who died in the line of duty.

Task & Purpose, a website focusing on military matters, reported on Tuesday that “Previously, survivors benefits that were allocated to the children of a fallen service member were taxed at the parent's rate. Under the new tax code, those benefits are instead treated the same as a trust or estate, which means they can be taxed at a rate as high as 37 percent....” Jessica Braden-Rogers, whose husband died in Afghanistan in 2012, used to pay about \$1,100 per year in taxes on benefits her son received. Now she pays \$4,600.

“We've always had a tax burden,” she told *Task & Purpose*, “but for me, quadrupling the tax burden of a Gold Star child is completely unfair. It's cruel. I mean why would you tax a nine year old?”

Early this week #45 was channeling #11, James K. Polk, threatening to send armed troops to the border with Mexico. Perhaps he's just bluffing—only a fool would believe anything he says. On the other hand, maybe he's planning to start a border war, to distract us all from his tax returns. That way he can create more Gold Star families without the hassle of flying people all the way to Afghanistan.

The latest eye-popper came Wednesday morning. *The New York Times* reported that Kirstjen Nielson—the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security—tried to talk to the President about protecting the 2020 election from further Russian interference, but his guard dog, Nick Mulvaney, just shoos her away.

Impeach Trump? How about impeaching Trump, Pence, Barr, Mulvaney, McConnell, Kevin McCarthy, Chuck Grassley, &c., &c.?

*The Alleged News®***Now, Time for Sports ... sort of**

One of our most faithful readers (and guerilla distributors) likes to take us to task for neglecting to cover sports. Perhaps the following item will placate him.

Our editorial ears perked up last week when the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team was swept in the playoffs. This was notable, we're told, because the Lightning had led the league in points during the regular season. That, in itself, would not have sparked our interest. What brought us up short was the name of the winners: the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Since our only form of exercise is jumping to conclusions, we instantly deduced that the team had been named after the Shawnee war chief Weyapiersenwah (c. 1743 – 1810), better known by the moniker Blue Jacket. A lifelong resident of central Ohio, he certainly achieved distinc-

tion enough to have had something notable named after him.

As a marketing ploy for building a fan base, though, given the widespread support for “our military,” it would have been a bold strategy.

A former ally of the British, Blue Jacket and his ally Little Turtle led a coalition of Native America forces in the Battle of the Wabash. That 1791 battle, also known as St. Clair's Defeat, has justly been called the most decisive loss ever inflicted on the U.S. military. The opposing sides were nearly matched: about 1,100 natives to 1,000 soldiers. St. Clair's guard was down, though. All but 67 of his men were either killed, captured, or wounded.

Was some wealthy casino-owning tribe bankrolling a hockey team to “own the Anglos?” Not according to the official story.

The new franchise “held a ‘Name the Team’ contest throughout central Ohio during the month of August 1997,” according to the league's website. “[T]he League and the franchise narrowed the list of potential names down to two – Blue Jackets and Justice.

“...it was the Blue Jackets name that intrigued the NHL and the Columbus franchise the most.

“It was first thought that the Blue Jackets were named after the Indian chief, Blue Jacket, from Xenia, Ohio, but that was not the case.

“The Blue Jackets name was selected because the name pays homage to Ohio's contributions to American history [blah blah] Civil War ... city of Columbus ... Ohio contributed more of its population to the Union Army than any other state, while many of the Blue Coats

worn by the Union soldiers were manufactured in Columbus.”

Couple with that the fact that John H. McConnell, founder, majority owner, chairman, and governor of the team, was a Navy veteran of WWII, a global industrialist, and a Master Mason, and we can probably rule out any seditious intent.

Local Boy Makes Bad Again

We've long been fascinated by Matt Bevin, the Governor of Kentucky. A Republican of the Tea Party persuasion, Bevin was raised in tiny Shelburne, N.H. Last November we noted that he had lavished state tax breaks on Ken Ham's money-losing for-profit Noah's Ark theme park.

The *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported Monday that in 2017, Bevin threw \$15 million of taxpayer money into a proposed aluminum mill. Oops—turns out the soil at the

intended location could not support the plant's weight. Braidy, the company behind the plant, didn't have the money to build at a more suitable site. Guess that's what happens when Republicans try to pick winners and losers.

Braidy found a willing investor, though, to invest the needed cash. There was just one detail which had to be ironed out. The investor, Oleg Deripaska, is reputed to be a member of Bratva—the heart of Russian organized crime—and is therefore on an economic sanctions list.

Fortunately for Bevin, Kentucky Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul rode to the rescue and voted to exempt Deripaska from sanctions.

The Alleged News®
from page one

Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire
Finds Permanent Home

It all began with one woman, Portsmouth native Valerie Cunningham, collecting names and dates and stories. It grew to become the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail. Working from a small office at Discover Portsmouth, its mission was to preserve, celebrate, and honor the history and culture of the African-American community in Portsmouth. Later moving to the city-owned South Ward Meeting-house, it expanded its scope and became the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire [BHTNH].

In the spring of 2017, the organization's Board of Directors set out to find it a home of its own. In March of 2018, they signed an agreement to purchase 222 Court Street. The building is eminently suitable, for a couple of reasons.

It is conveniently located just a few blocks from the African Burial Ground, where all Sankofa walk-

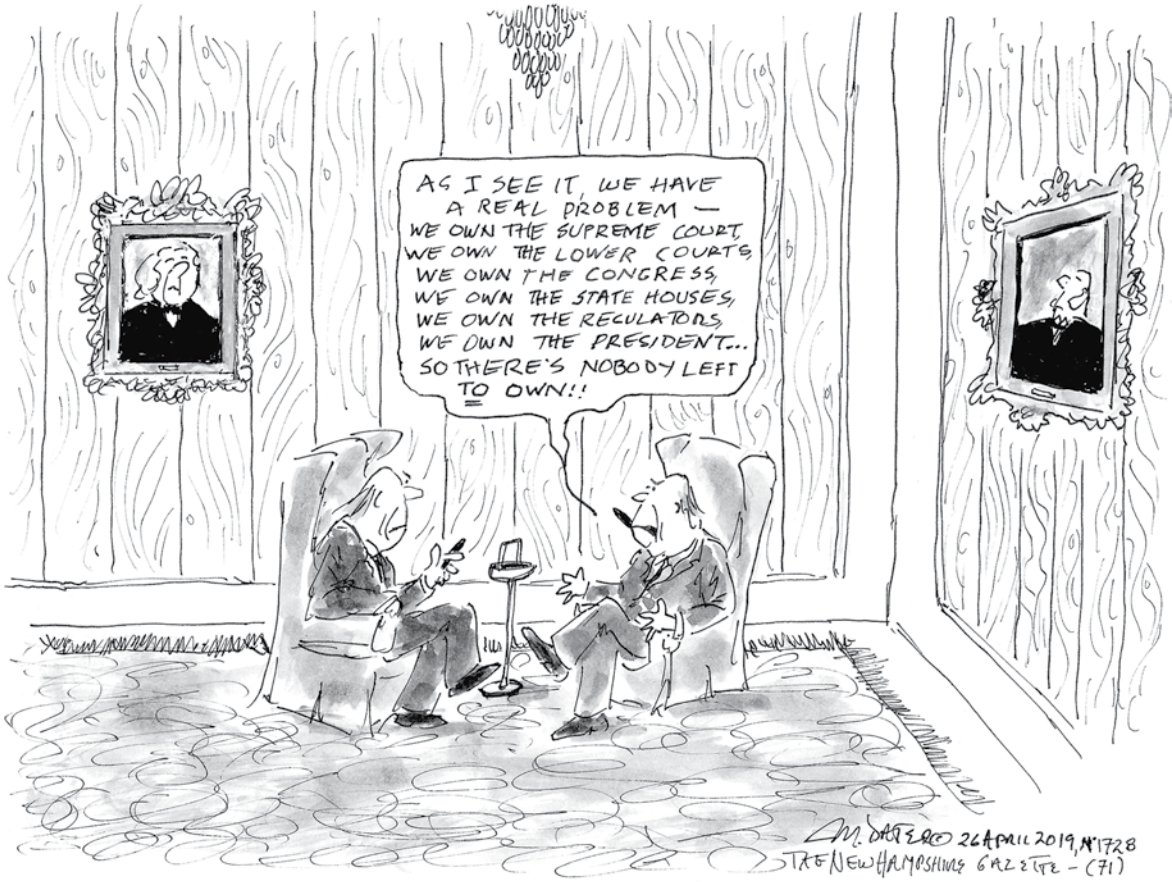
ing tours of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail conclude. And, it is historically relevant. Built in 1749, it served as the parsonage for Reverend Arthur Browne. The first Rector of Queen's Chapel, now St. John's Episcopal Church, Browne kept two "negro males" enslaved at the property. They were later bequeathed—one each—to Rev. Browne's wife and nephew.

On Wednesday, May 1st, at noon, Board President Reverend Robert Thompson will conduct an official blessing at 222 Court Street. This event will be open to the public and will include an informational session on the history of the building. On May 2nd, there will be an invitation-only Founding Donors reception, hosted by the Board of Directors.

Friday, May 3rd, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., as part of Art 'Round Town, there will be an opening and reception featuring Graphic Novel Artist Joel Christian Gill. He will discuss his exhibit, "Fast Enough," which will be on display through July at the BHTNH offices.



It began decades ago: the patient collection of the stories of New Hampshire's black men and women, enslaved and free. Retrieved, little by little, from the mists of centuries past, in gentle defiance of the powers which had brushed them aside. Gathered up, kept together, they lent power to each other. Now they have a home of their own. The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire will open its doors at 222 Court Street on Friday, May 3rd, at 5:00 p.m. All are welcome.



Gill, Chair of Comic Arts at the New Hampshire Institute of Art, is author of *Strange Fruit, Volume I: Uncelebrated Narratives from Black History*, and *Fast Enough: Bessie Stringfield's First Ride*, the true story of the first African-American woman to ride a motorcycle across the United States solo, and one of the few civilian motorcycle dispatch riders for the U.S. Army during World War II.

On May 4th, the BHTNH will hold its 2019 Spring Symposium entitled Emancipation & the 13th Amendment: The Legacy of Enslavement. The program will explore the legacy of enslavement and the psychological effects of centuries of systemic racism that have resulted in multigenerational adaptive behaviors that are detrimental and destructive to the nation. The program will also examine how varying levels of socially learned stress related issues were passed along through generations as a result of slavery. Through interactive dialogue with

the presenters, participants will have an opportunity to unlock their own truths by critically evaluating history, medicine, science and education.

As part of the Spring Symposium, the BHTNH is offering a guided walking tour entitled "Enslaved Bodies, Free Minds: The Making of a Black Community in Portsmouth, N.H.," that will include the history of its new home.

Mechanic's Error Apparently Fatal
A preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board suggests that a mechanic's mistaken diagnosis may have been the root cause of a fatal Robinson R44 helicopter crash in Tampa. The engine of the machine in question had quit four days earlier, on March 31st. The pilot made a successful forced landing by autorotation. On April 4th, the day of the accident, mechanics replaced parts of the fuel system. A pilot tested the machine by hovering for a few minutes, then set out for the Sarasota airport. Fifteen minutes

later it crashed on South 50th Street, killing Deodat Gangapersaud, 72.

In a report dated April 12th, the NTSB stated that "the induction air inlet duct was partially collapsed. The inner rubberized fabric liner of the duct had partially delaminated and separated from the outer rubberized fabric, obstructing the interior volume of the duct."

Robinson Helicopter Crashes into Water
For the second time this year, a helicopter crashed into the water near Anna Maria Island in Florida. A student pilot and his instructor were trying to make a turn in a Robinson R22, but didn't have enough altitude. The machine went nose-first into the Intracoastal Waterway, then flipped over. The pilot and his instructor both escaped injury.

A Robinson R44 crashed near the same island on January 2nd; two men were hospitalized.

Merciful—Up To a Point

At approximately 12:30 p.m. on April 22nd, while on routine patrol

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along Congress St., the Flag Police encountered the fouled flag shown below as Exhibit A.

According to the After Action Report, “A small hole in the fabric of the fly top snagged on a lower serif of the gold-colored lettering spelling out the name of a commercial establishment.” [The fly top is the corner of a flag where the top edge meets the fly—the fly being the short edge of a flag which has no grommets and flies furthest from the pole.]

Though their zealous commitment to the Code which they uphold may sometimes give the impression that the Flag Police are composed solely of humorless and punctilious martinets, they are not without mercy. Not only was it Sunday, it was Easter. Evidence was duly collected that day, but judgment was withheld.

A citation was issued, however, the following day, when the flag was seen to be still out of compliance, while the door of the establishment was open for business. To have done otherwise would have violated the Flag Police motto: “Eternal vigilance is the price of upholding the fetishization of material objects which signify the values of a purported republic in the absence of any perceptible functionality.”

N.H. Gazette Marks Another Milestone
Next Wednesday, May 1st, will mark 20 years to the day since this newspaper resumed regularly-scheduled publication, here in the town where it was founded 262 years ago. In lieu of a grand city-wide party [see below], we will modestly offer the following condensed history.

The *New Hampshire Gazette* was the first newspaper in what was then a province. Its editor and publisher, Daniel Fowle, established the first print shop in New Hampshire after being briefly imprisoned in Boston over his tangential involvement in the printing of a satirical pamphlet scandalously critical of the government there. Printing on a wooden press being laborious, Daniel relied on an enslaved African man called Primus. The *Gazette* became the Nation's Oldest Newspaper™ when the *Maryland Gazette*, the last newspaper to have been founded before it, folded in 1839.

In October of 1856—when newspapers were what the internet is today—the City of Portsmouth threw a Centennial Celebration of the Introduction of the Art of Printing to New Hampshire. Special trains brought hordes of printers and journalists from all around New England. Festivities included a parade,



a regatta, and a huge feast featuring many long-winded speakers.

From the late 19th century until early 1960, the *Gazette* was published in tandem with the daily *Portsmouth Herald*. Increasingly neglected, towards the end of that period it had slipped into near-obscurity. At about the time of the Nixon-Kennedy debates, the then-managers of the daily renamed the Saturday *Gazette* the *Herald Weekend Edition*. Fortunately, they had the presence of mind to state on its masthead that the *Herald* was “continuing the *New Hampshire Gazette*.” We like to think that its spirit hovered in the cloud of tobacco smoke hanging over the desks in the newsroom.

By 1989, the world's ninth-richest man, Kenneth Thomson, 2nd Baron Thomson of Fleet, owned more newspapers than anyone else in the world. His holdings included the *Herald*, and, thus, the *Gazette*. That spring the present Editor was tracking down a tale his father had told him thirty years earlier: “There was a

printer in the family, way back in the olden days. He printed something the authorities didn't like, so they threw him in jail.” In Isaiah Thomas' *History of Printing*, he found the story of Daniel Fowle and his imprisonment. Frank Luther Mott, in his *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 250 years 1690 to 1940*, confirmed Thomas' account and added the startling fact of the *Gazette*'s national seniority.

The most surprising discovery, though, came at the Secretary of State's office: the registration of the *Gazette*'s trade name had been allowed to expire. As a third cousin five times removed of its founder, the Editor had inherited a 26-word story. That, though, and a check for \$40 made out to the Secretary of State were enough to wrest the Nation's Oldest Newspaper™ from the world's ninth-richest man.

That check having cleared the bank—not always a certainty in those days—Secretary of State [for Life] Bill Gardner conferred the

rights to the trade name with his official Seal on May 1, 1989. It took a full year for the Editor to develop a format which could be sustained with capital assets four figures into the red.

On May 1, 1990, the first issue of the newly-independent paper was mailed to subscribers—mostly Vietnam veterans and people who had organized to fight a high-level nuclear waste dump the Department of Energy had proposed for southwestern New Hampshire. For a decade the paper was published episodically—peripatetically, too.

Nine years later we returned the paper to its hometown, having no idea what sort of reception to expect, and only the vaguest notion of how to proceed. Somehow, though the editor only attained his position through nepotism, and holds onto it only through stubbornness, we're still here. The credit for that goes to the many individuals whose patient and persistent help has made it possible, and to the readers whose kind attention has made it worthwhile.



Exhibit A [see above]. This fouled flag was found April 22 by the Flag Police at a Congress Street location. A citation was issued the following day.

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Keene Public Library, 60 Winter St.

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On Stochastic Terror
Dear Editor:

I just read the comments of Wayne Merritt on “Stochastic Terrorism” in your April 12th issue.

He points out a critical issue that must be fully and immediately understood by all people world wide and most especially by all Americans.

Anyone interested can view the attached link to a great article on this subject in October, by Heather Timmons, Quartz’s White House correspondent, on the Quartz Daily website: “Lone Wolf—Stochastic Terror and the cycle of hate that pushes unstable Americans to violence.” It can be found at: <https://qz.com/1436267/trump-stochastic-terror-and-the-hate-that-ends-in-violence>.

Below is an excerpt from Timmons’ article.

Stochastic Terrorism

“Back in 2011, an anonymous writer coined the term ‘stochastic terrorism’ to refer to ‘the use of mass communication to incite random actors to carry out violent or terrorist acts that are statistically predictable but individually unpredictable,’ or, in other words ‘remote control terror by lone wolf.’

“Stochastic means ‘having a random probability distribution or pattern that may be analysed statistically’ but are hard to predict precisely. Vitriolic messages disseminated by pundits like Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, and Bill O’Reilly will have the same effect as Osama bin Laden’s videotaped calls to violence,” the writer warned way back in 2011.

Another important and eye opening source for info on this subject is the book by Kathleen Belew, Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of Chicago: *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*. Its a tough read, but well worth it. An article on this book can be found at: <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/new-book-uchicago-historian-examines-rise-white-power-movement>. Belew also did a great interview on NPR with Lulu Garcia-Navarro: <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/17/704209677/>

how-white-supremacist-ideology-spreads. And, on WBEZ Chicago: <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/25/605661710/how-americas-white-power-movement-coalesced-after-the-vietnam-war>.

Erland Russell
Oak Park, Illinois
Dear Erland:

*Thank you for writing. It’s a fascinating and all-too-relevant topic. We checked out what is apparently the original source, at <http://stochasticterrorism.blogspot.com/>. Though it’s only a single post, it’s titled, “Stochastic Terrorism: **Part 1**, triggering the shooters.”*

Did the writer decided he’d said all he had to say? Or did some fan of Beck, Hannity, or O’Reilly—or maybe Trump himself—track him down and shut him up?

These idiots are obviously stoking random acts of violence, but what are you going to do? Use the law to shut them up? No thanks. We’d rather keep the First Amendment intact.

The Editor

—==—

Don’t Let Wheelabrator Spew Lead

To the Editor:

Two months ago, Governor Chris Sununu addressed lawmakers about the state budget. They applauded when he said “Together we’ll continue to improve prevention of childhood lead poisoning.” Their applause is welcome news for supporters of House Bill 358, legislation that reduces the risk of lead exposure by restoring New Hampshire’s ban on burning construction and demolition debris (C&D) and its fuel byproducts. HB 358 passed the House, and it is now the Senate’s turn to support this important legislation.

C&D is often contaminated with lead, a toxic metal for which there is no safe level of exposure. Combustion releases lead in a form that can be easily inhaled and ingested. C&D should never be burned.

Current New Hampshire law allows 250 milligrams of lead in each kilogram of C&D approved for combustion. This is a shocking amount since the toxicity of lead is measured in micrograms or a millionth of a gram. Burning 10,000 tons of C&D



annually, as allowed at the Wheelabrator trash incinerator in Concord, can legally introduce 2.5 tons of lead into the environment in the form of air pollution, ash, leachate, and sludge. A proposed pyrolysis facility in Epping could process up to 146,000 tons of C&D each year to make waste-derived fuels. This is unacceptable.

Restoring New Hampshire’s sensible ban on burning C&D and C&D fuels will reduce the risk of lead exposure. I urge Governor Sununu and the New Hampshire Senate to support House Bill 358.

Katie Lajoie, RN
Charlestown, N.H.

Katie:

Let’s just hope Governor Sununu doesn’t decide airborne lead is an essential component of the New Hampshire Advantage.™

The Editor

—==—

A Chance for New Hampshire to Lead

To the Editor:

I was very pleased to hear about HB 560, the effort to reduce New Hampshire’s reliance on single-use plastic bags. With environmental concerns so prominent right now, I feel strongly that the negative impact of the production and disposal of these bags far outweighs the minor convenience that we derive from them.

New Hampshire is known its natural beauty, and we rely on our pristine environment—beaches, lakes, rivers, mountains—for both tourism and our own enjoyment. Shouldn’t we be doing everything we can to keep these ecosystems healthy? No one wants to swim in a plastic-clogged river, or fish in a chemical-laden lake. Reducing our plastic waste makes both ecological and economic sense.

This should not be a partisan issue. In New Hampshire, both political parties have demonstrated pragmatism and Yankee good sense. Surely we can live with the minor inconvenience

of reusing our own bags at the store. It is difficult to imagine that the impact on business would be very negative—people will still need to buy groceries and other necessities. Other areas that have implemented similar bans have found no negative impact.

This is an opportunity for New Hampshire to be a leader—to show the younger generation, who are understandably very concerned about the environment being left for them—that our state has a strong vision for a sustainable future and the courage to make it happen. We should not let it pass us by.

Jennifer Pavlik
Durham, N.H.

Jennifer:

Due to a sudden impulse to refrain from making cynical comments about the state’s political ability to implement a strong vision for a sustainable future, we’ll just thank you for writing and encourage you to remain engaged, regardless of the outcome of this particular issue.

The Editor

—==—

Show Us #45’s 1040s

Dear Sir:

26 U.S. Code Section 6103(f)(1) states: “Upon written request from the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives, the chairman of the Committee on Finance of the Senate, or the chairman of the Joint Committee on Taxation, the Secretary (of the Treasury) shall furnish such committee with ant return or return information specified in such request, except that any return or return information which can be associated with, or otherwise identify, directly or indirectly, a particular taxpayer shall be furnished to such committee only when sitting in closed executive session unless such taxpayer otherwise consents in writing

to such disclosure.”

The law is crystal clear. This law provides no exemptions to any person, including the President. The law does not require the committee to state any reason or justifications for their request. The law does not provide an exemption for any return under audit by the IRS. The only requirement is that the committee receiving the return or return information must do so in closed executive session, unless the taxpayer otherwise consents to an open disclosure.

Despite the clarity and specificity of this law, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has delayed meeting the request of Rep. Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He requested and was granted an extension until April 23rd to comply. Despite the clarity of this law, White Acting Chief of Staff, Mulvaney has stated that “Congress will never see Trump’s taxes.”

Why are Mr. Trump and his allies so concerned about releasing his tax returns? Did not Mr. Trump promise to release his taxes after the election? Obviously there must be information within these returns that would be very damaging and embarrassing to Trump. As with the full Mueller Report, and now his taxes, for a man who so strongly proclaims his total innocence of any wrong doing or unethical behavior, his actions to conceal information from Congress and the American people seems more applicable to a person with a great deal of incriminating information to keep secret.

Rich DiPentima
Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:

Trump and Mnuchin are proudly parading their contempt for the law. According to today’s excruciatingly stupid

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journalistic norms, some pious tool should be asking other members of their party if they support this sort of behavior. Oh, wait—that rule only seems to apply to Democrats.

The GOP seems to have developed the perfect weapon: conduct your politics in a manner so egregious that the media don't dare describe it honestly.

The Editor

him to ignore—if he's even aware of—the fact that his obeisance to the oil industry is flat-out killing the planet. Adding insult to injury, his implacable demeanor exudes a sense of privilege as he does it.

He's said to have grand-children. Surely they love him. We can't help but wonder how long that will last, given the consequences of his behavior.

The Editor

Another New Low

Dear Sir:

To witness Republicans celebrating the findings in the Muller Report is a clear reflection of just how low we have sunk as a nation. The Mueller Report highlighted at least ten episodes where Donald Trump either committed obstruction of justice, or attempted to do so, only to be saved by his more rational aids. The report stated, "If we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the president clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and applicable legal standards, we are unable to reach that judgement." (Emphasis added.)

Since the Muller investigation could not conclude that Mr. Trump did not clearly commit obstruction of justice, that certainly leaves the door wide open to the fact that he did. Unfortunately, Mr. Mueller did not indict Mr. Trump because he accepted the opinion of a previous Department of Justice (DOJ) policy that declared that a sitting president could not be indicted. Any other individual who acted in the same manner as Mr. Trump would have been indicted for obstruction of justice.

Mr. Mueller and the DOJ policy regarding non-indictment of a sitting president assume that in lieu of indictment, the Congress would respond to presidential criminal be-

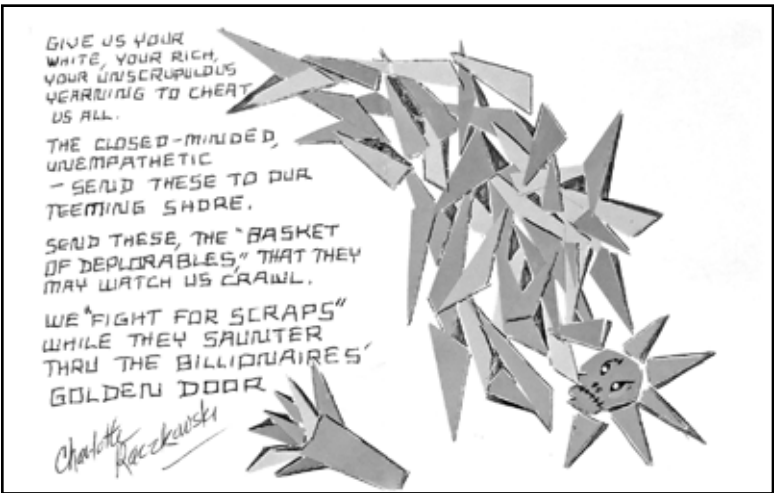
havior through the powers granted to them in the Constitution. Congress has the legal duty and responsibility to take the necessary steps to initiate the impeachment process by the House of Representatives and ultimately the Senate to remove a President who has committed high crimes and misdemeanors. As such, Mr. Muller has passed the Constitutional baton to the Congress, providing them with the necessary documentation to at least initiate impeachment proceedings in

stitutional responsibility would be a slap in the face to the rule of law, and establish a dangerous precedent for a future congress dealing with future presidential misbehavior. Congress must act to demonstrate that no one, not even the President, is above the law. This is the basic foundation of our Republic, either we are all accountable to the law, or none of us are.

Rich DiPentima
Portsmouth, N.H.

Obstruction of a Counterintel Investigation
To the Editor:

Former CIA Director Mike Pompeo (under POTUS #45), before becoming the current Secretary of State, asserted: "The director stands by



the House to determine if articles of impeachment are warranted, and if so, to send them to the Senate for a trial.

House Democrats now are faced with two possible options. They can take the politically expedient route, and avoid their Constitutional duty, knowing that the Republican Senate would under no circumstances ever convict Mr. Trump, and pass this on to the people to decide in the 2020 election. The second option is to uphold their Constitutional duty and to initiate the process to remove a person who has clearly demonstrated behavior that is fully detailed in the Mueller report, even with the heavy redactions made by Attorney General Barr, that shows him to be totally unfit to hold the office of President.

For Congress to abandon its Con-

and has always stood by the January 2017 intelligence community assessment entitled: 'Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections.' The intelligence assessment with regard to Russian election meddling has not changed." Furthermore, all three of the nation's intelligence chiefs (CIA Director Haspel, Director of National Intelligence Coats and FBI Director Wray) recently told Congress that their assessment remains the same as Director Pompeo's.

The intelligence assessment concluded that the Russian government interfered in the 2016 election to support Pompeo's current boss. Said intelligence assessment prompted the FBI, under the leadership of James Comey, to initiate a counterintelligence investigation to learn how a foreign ad-

versarial nation (Russia) interfered in our election and to prevent them and others from doing the same in future elections. It appears that Comey was fired for his pursuit of the truth on this matter.

Like you, I've not been privy to the Mueller Report which my tax dollars paid for. Perhaps a patriotic Daniel Ellsberg-type, of the Pentagon Papers' fame, will come along and leak the entire report to us. However, it does appear that the one thing the intelligence community, the Mueller investigative team, and Attorney General William Barr unanimously agree on is that the claim that Russia committed an assault on our democracy on behalf of the current POTUS was not a "hoax" or "witch hunt" as incessantly described by POTUS #45.

So, now that it is officially undisputed that the Russian government boldly interfered in the 2016 election to support #45, shouldn't we all be demanding that #45, as the Commander-in-Chief, and his Republican cohorts finally acknowledge said fact openly and address this assault on American Democracy by Russia as opposed to publically siding with Putin over the U.S. intelligence community? Meanwhile, I don't think it would be incorrect to suggest, given all we've witnessed with our own eyes over the last two years, that our President and his GOP and conservative media accomplices are guilty of obstructing a counterintelligence investigation.

Wayne H. Merritt
Dover, N.H.

Wayne:

Here is the true efficacy of the GOP crime family's strategy: never govern, just spend all your time breaking the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Do that, and no single offense stands out enough to make much of an impression. What would once have been an administration-ending scandal just becomes part of the background noise.

The Editor

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

to page six

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"We are all vainer of our luck than of our merits."
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The Fechheimer Building, one of the finest examples of a cast-iron facade in Portland, Oregon, was built in 1885. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it was restored in 1981 by Russell Fellows Properties, the principals of which enjoy a subscription to this newspaper.

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The Northcountry Chronicle

Longing for Washington

by William Marvel

Two hundred and thirty years ago on April 30, George Washington took the oath of office as president of the United States. He did so reluctantly, and not merely because the seat of government was in New York City, although that would seem like sufficient reason to decline the office today. The simple fact was that he didn't want the job, but he had been the overwhelming choice for it and he considered it his duty to accept. Someone had to do it, after all. It's an outdated concept, little understood in an age when most Americans are obsessed with rights and oblivious to obligations.

Our first presidential election entailed what modern political activists might recognize as a form of ranked-choice voting. Sometimes that method works out for the best, and sometimes not so much. Those who like the concept generally don't recognize the damage it can do, and simply support it because their faction lost a recent election that it

might have won under a ranked-choice system. When they call it a good idea, they really only mean that it's a good idea for their party—as Maine Democrats recently illustrated.

The major problem with ranked-choice voting is that it exaggerates the tyranny of simple majorities and tends to muzzle the moderating effect of dissent. That may have been evident in the earliest election results, which produced no popular vote at all. Each participating state (and only ten of the thirteen took part) either chose its presidential electors through a popular vote or left the selection to the state legislature. Anomalous as ever, New Hampshire did both. No electors received a majority of the popular votes, so the state senate had to chose them in the end.

The resulting representatives constituted the Electoral College, which is now under fire from politicians and activists whose immediate partisan ambition again overcomes any understanding they might have

of its purposes. The lopsided outcome nevertheless demonstrated the ranked-choice flaw of magnifying the wishes of a simple majority. If any candidates actively sought the presidency, their campaigning was all done in private, and each elector was asked to choose two men (of course) for president and vice president. They did not differentiate between the two, but simply submitted two names, and whichever name turned up most often became president; the runner-up became vice president.

There should have been 91 members in the Electoral College that year, but Rhode Island and North Carolina had not ratified the Constitution in time for the election, which took place early in February. New York had not chosen its electors by then, either, and four more electors from Maryland and Virginia failed to reach New York in time to cast their ballots. That left 69 electors, and Washington came up with 69 votes. That was more than twice as many as the favorite second

choice, John Adams, who had 34 votes.

The other 35 votes were scattered across ten other candidates. There were technically no political parties at the time. Washington considered that a good thing, but fundamental differences over the strength and role of the federal government would soon split state and federal officeholders and aspirants into Federalists and Anti-Federalists. The differences already existed in 1789, however, and the consequence of ranked-choice voting as it trickled up through the process was to muffle apparent dissent. Only four of the dozen candidates for president or vice president that year would later become identified with the Anti-Federalist Party, and they collectively captured a mere 10 percent of the electoral vote. By 1800 their faction won the presidency.

Like most of those in his station, Washington doubted that the uneducated masses could muster the wisdom and discipline necessary for self-government. He and his peers

worried that the franchise might be granted to people who owned no property, and would never have to pay for the costs of their political decisions. They shuddered in horror at the idea of national decisions being made by those who were not even citizens, whose allegiance was not certain. As we know today, of course, the fears of those patricians were absolutely ridiculous. They might as well have anticipated that some insane politicians of the future might consider giving the vote to children.

If I had to guess, I would say that Washington abhorred the idea of political parties because his social class generally observed the dictates of noblesse oblige, at least insofar as it was understood at the time. Those who sanctimoniously insist on judging people of the past by the morals of the present scorn him for owning slaves, and for his paternalistic worldview, but his motives were purer than those of any politician in the last century or two. What I wouldn't give for another reluctant president.

from page five

The Monoculture of Republicanism
To the Editor:

The monoculture of Republicanism can readily be observed in the halls of Congress, where one is hard pressed to find Republican members who are not Christian white men. Conversely, it seems, the Democrat representatives are a diverse group of men and woman, with a variety of ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs.

Upon inquiry about any given topic, the Republican representatives invariably answer in essentially verbatim responses, parroting the talking points handed down by their leaders. The lockstep march of the members is seen as a strength by many. They are formidable soldiers

advancing the cause, rather than mindless adherers to scripts without any sign of individuality.

This "messaging" is effective in drilling certain words or phrases into the minds of the voters, whether we want them there or not. The aim is to get us to buy their "product" i.e. policies. After all, if everyone is saying it, it must be true... Rinse, repeat.

Republicans have circled the wagons around the President, with guns blazing, to divide the Democrats with divisive rhetoric. Ah, what a strategy! The very idea that Democrats might have a variety in their responses, might even think outside the box, horror!



Are we playing Red Rover? Is a break in the line defeat? Hell no! Our diversity is our strength, our constituency is not cookie cutter, but a myriad of individuals with particular stories to be told and respected. Just as biodiversity in the natural environment adds strength and stability, the debates within the Democratic Party give voice to considerations that enable inclusiveness and true democratic consensus.

Whether they are playing Red Rover, or Follow the Leader, it is clear there is a lack of representation in the Republican Party that can truly serve the interests of the

American people.

Didi Wallace
Portsmouth, N.H.

The Bully in the Bully Pulpit
Dear Editor:

If a schoolyard bully insults and assaults other kids, supervising adults may "tsk-tsk" with a cluck of their tongues, but if they do nothing else, they aid, abet, and enable the bully's bad behavior. Reprimand is demanded for the sake of the other kids, and for the sake of abiding by the rules, if not for the sake of teaching the reprimanded child as well.

And so it is with our precious democracy, that those whose respon-

sibility is to check our President's lawless obstruction are now called to active duty. Disparaging clucking sounds without meaningful reprimand would enable the White House bully to continue treating our collective government and trusted commonwealth as his personal platform for pecuniary power. Cheats, liars, law-benders and law-breakers, including and especially the President and his minions, must face consequence for their actions, or else our civil society will deconstruct to schoolyards where might makes right.

Those who say this is not the time for Congressional impeachment fail to acknowledge that the clock runs out in nine months when 2020 election campaigning will be fulsome, and calls for lawful accountability

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Tax day: A thrill...or a chill?

by Jim Hightower

How thrilling was tax day for you?

I refer, of course, to the thrill of getting that big juicy reduction in your taxes, thanks to the \$1.5 trillion tax cut that Donald Trump and the Republicans passed. Remember? They promised it would deliver a 7-course dinner for everyone! Middle-class Americans should be

grateful to the GOP, said Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, because “you have more money in your pocket.”

Uh...actually, Mitch, no. While the richest one-tenth of one percent of taxpayers wallowed in more than \$100,000 each from your skewed giveaway, the great majority of us have now learned that our 7-course dinner is a possum and a 6-pack! At most. Indeed, an April poll by the

Wall Street Journal reveals that only 17 percent of Americans can detect that they got any tax cut at all.

In fact, the Republican tax bill was a cynical bait-and-switch job from the start. They did make a small, highly-publicized cut in the middle-class' tax rate, but—hocus-pocus—they quietly disappeared that benefit by eliminating or reducing various tax deductions that those families had been entitled to.

Also, by cutting about a trillion dollars from the tax payments owed by the richest corporations and people, they clearly were going to nuclearize the federal deficit. So, to overcome that political hurdle, they resorted to the hoariest rhetorical trick of demagogic political scoundrels: The BIG LIE, which Trump & Company repeated loudly and constantly. The giveaway, intoned a smirking McConnell to the media,

will not gut government revenues but will be a “revenue-producer.” Of course, it was not, instead skyrocketing our country's deficit, which is now projected to surpass a trillion dollars next year.

That wasn't a thrill that people felt on tax day—it was a financial chill.

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from page six

will be misinterpreted as political grandstanding. Those who say that Congressional impeachment is futile because Republican Senators will not vote to convict an impeached Trump fail to believe that America can self-correct and regain its course toward the ideals of liberty and justice under law. If Congress Representatives and Senators fail to hold the President accountable for breaking our laws and for endangering us from foreign intervention, voters can fail to reelect them in 2020. So-called political realists who call for more investigation, outside of impeachment proceedings that bring consequence, would enable the law-breaker to continue evading and lying while bullying others and enriching himself, at our peril.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

Bruce:

Strange to recall how many centrist Democrats went along with the Republican push for tougher law enforcement. It's a shame there's no mechanism to force such politicians to indicate exactly where on the power spectrum it becomes inexpedient to uphold the law.

Under our present system selling loosies [individual cigarettes] on the sidewalk is a capital offense—no trial required. Trampling the Constitution while wearing golf shoes? Not worth writing a ticket.

The Editor

=====

War Crimes And National Security

By Robert C. Koehler

How dare she question the sanctity of American militarism?

As national security adviser John Bolton declared last fall, the Inter-

national Criminal Court [ICC] constitutes “an assault on the constitutional rights of the American people and the sovereignty of the United States.”

That's you and me that Bolton is speaking about, and the recent revocation of ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's visa—in the wake of her insistence on investigating, among other things, U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan—is just the latest step in the diplomatic war the United States has declared against the court since it was established in 2002.

The “largely unspoken, but always central, aim” of the International Criminal Court's “most vigorous supporters was to constrain the United States” Bolton said, whipping up the rhetoric against the very idea of international law and global values. “The objective was not limited to targeting individual U.S. service members, but rather America's senior political leadership, and its relentless determination to keep our country secure.”

This is shock-and-awe level rhetoric, words meant to crush all debate, all discussion. American is a free country, man. That's the highest value on Planet Earth. It has the freedom to wage any war it wants, and every war it wages is absolutely necessary, according to Bolton and the military-industrial machine he represents.

It seems to me that a more complex set of values used to drive this country's official rhetoric. In the Trump era, things have gotten increasingly simplistic, as the admin-

istration seeks to define the country as complete: no more evolution allowed. The borders are closed... to Muslims, Mexicans and International Criminal Court prosecutors.

Consider the United States in the wake of World War II—as much an arrogant superpower then as now, to be sure, but presumably driven by values beyond the right to do what it wants. The country played a central role in the establishment of the International Military Tribunal, which set standards to begin creating global peace and, of course, held the defeated Axis powers of Europe accountable to them.

The punishable transgressions committed by the losers of the Second World War, seemingly put forward by the winners with the idea that they must never happen again, included: (a) Crimes against Peace, i.e., the planning and waging of a war of aggression; (b) War Crimes, such as “wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity”; and (c) Crimes against Humanity: i.e., “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population.”

What if these words actually meant something (which is what the International Criminal Court seems to think is the case)?

“If today the U.S. government were to put itself on trial, on the same basis it employed to try the Nazis at Nuremberg, for actions taken in Afghanistan and Iraq in recent

years, it might have to convict itself.”

So wrote Robert Higgs of the Independent Institute think tank—in May 2004! At that point the war in Afghanistan, now the longest war in U.S. history, was less than three years old, and the Iraq war had been going barely a year.

“Can anyone sincerely maintain that what was a crime for Hermann Goering and Alfred Jodl,” Higgs continued, “is not equally a crime for Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney?”

Well, John Bolton can. And this is another decade and a half down the road, with the wars, barely in the news anymore, still going on. It's almost as though they're grinding forward on their own, but as Bolton reminded us, they represent the will of “America's senior political leadership, and its relentless determination to keep our country secure.”

These are words forged in the vat of political self-interest into defensive armor, a.k.a., politician-speak cliché. When held up against the actual reality of war, they leave one gasping for breath. For instance, Human Rights Watch, summarizing the 2014 findings of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee's report on the CIA's “enhanced interrogation” techniques, pointed out:

“The summary describes many previously reported facts about the CIA torture program, including the agency's use of painful stress positions, forced standing, extended sleep deprivation, extensive bright light and loud noise exposure, wa-

terboarding, and throwing detainees against walls or closing them into coffins.

“It also contains new details showing that CIA torture was even more brutal than previously thought. The agency used painful restraints, imposed punitive ‘anal feeding’ or ‘anal rehydration,’ and forced detainees with broken leg bones to stand shackled against walls.”

All in the name of our nation's security! And there's so much more. What about our bombing campaigns—the murder of uncounted villagers, wedding party celebrants... in North Korea and Vietnam as well as Afghanistan and Iraq. Eventually they simply became collateral damage, a term of great emotional benefit to mass murderers such as Timothy McVeigh.

Higgs, writing about the decimation of the village of Makr al-Deeb, in Iraq, on May 19, 2004, in which U.S. bombing and strafing killed more than 40 people, quoted a survivor's words to an Associated Press reporter: “One of (the dead) was my daughter. I found her a few steps from the house, her 2-year-old son Raad in her arms. Her 1-year-old son, Raed, was lying nearby, missing his head.”

This data, almost too painful to quote, is wide open to the public. Multiply it by several thousand or a million and it manages to turn into national security.

But each incident, looked at up close, before the dead become collateral damage, is a war crime. Sorry, Ms. Bensouda, but national security requires that we revoke your visa.

Robert Koehler, syndicated by Peace-Voice, is an award-winning Chicago journalist.

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