

The Fortnightly Rant

It's a Whole New Ball Game

Though it was long before our time—Julius Caesar's assassination predated our founding by seven times our lifespan to date*—we often daydream of life in ancient times. What was it like to live in a world controlled by capricious and uncaring gods?

Now we know. Last week certain Supreme Beings—half a dozen unelected religious zealots, five of them appointed by politicians who lost the popular vote, and several of whom likely perjured themselves in order to get the gig—declared holy war on us mere mortals.

Thursday they threw out gun bans, overthrowing a precedent going back a century and a half. These may be best remembered through the 1993 movie *Tombstone*. It showed the Earp brothers enforcing local law prohibiting random cowpokes from packing iron any-damn-where they pleased.

The film was historically accurate, and *Tombstone* was no outlier. As Matt Jancer wrote for *The Smithsonian* in 2018, one thing “*Tombstone*, *Deadwood*, *Dodge City*, or *Abilene*...had in common: strict gun control laws.” The same was true, to “varying degrees, in the once-rowdy frontier towns of Nevada, Kansas, Montana, and South Dakota.”

These revisionist Supreme Beings, though, would have us believe that Kurt Russell, Sam Elliott, and Val Kilmer sold us all a bill of goods. In effect they are saying that the real Wyatt, Virgil, and Doc were just a mob of well-armed hypocrites—Stalinistic enemies of freedom, cruelly oppressing upstanding citizens like the Clantons and the McLaurys.

Now that repression is over. The Supreme Beings have given us an Oprah impersonation for the ages:

* -44 BC + 1756 = 1800; 1800 ÷ 265 = 6.79.

“You get a gun, and you get a gun, and you get a gun, &c.”

In our brave new neoliberal† Nirvana, Americans now have more freedom than ever to choose their weapons. Typically we've gone for the cutting word. We shall see how we fare in a nation full of Glocks.

Exciting as this was, our black-robed overlords were just getting started. The next day, apparently deeming recent public debate insufficiently robust, and wanting to give us something truly worth fighting about, they unleashed the real Kraken.

Well over half the country experienced once again the defining sensation of our times: being shocked but not surprised. *Roe v. Wade*? Done and dusted. Women, you are cordially invited to kiss your bodily autonomy goodbye. The decision whether you will bear a child is no longer a matter for you and your doctor. Instead, your mostly-male state legislators will now decide for you.

We suppose one could argue that the Supes were being kind. An unprecedented leak of Alito's draft opinion—what true God needs more than one name?—provided us with a warning.

One could just as easily argue the opposite, though. Why pass up the chance to torment your subjects with a month of anticipatory dread?

Seven out of ten Americans alive today have only ever known a post-Roe world. Out of the fifteen Justices who have been raised to Godhood since the Roe decision, nary a one has dared to declare that they would overturn that precedent.

† Neoliberalism is a policy model that encompasses both politics and economics and seeks to transfer the control of economic factors from the public sector to the private sector. Many neoliberalism policies enhance the workings of free market capitalism and attempt to place limits on government spending, government regulation, and public ownership. — *Investopedia.org*.



Had any of them done so, they never would have made it past their Senate confirmation hearings. These extravaganzas are yet another example of Americanized kabuki. To prove they are qualified for apotheosis, a candidate must demonstrate an ability to say nothing with enough words to intimidate anyone unable to match their glibness. The inarticulate need not apply.

Here are Alito's relevant remarks to the Senate in 2006: “*Roe v. Wade* is an important precedent of the Supreme Court. ...it has been on the books for a long time. It is a precedent It has been challenged. It has been reaffirmed. But it is an issue that is involved in litigation now at all levels.”

Sixteen years later, writing from the comfort of the high bench, deep within his columned temple, Alito showed that he could be more direct: “Roe was egregiously wrong from the start.”

Reactionaries posing as conservatives like to remind us heathens that actions have consequences. If they would but listen, we would agree.

The question is, consequences for whom? Alito and his ilk have no doubt saved—for a time, at least—innumerable zygotes, blastocysts, and fetuses. In the process, though, they will also have killed an unknown number of women who would otherwise have lived—half a century of propaganda notwithstanding, it is safer to have an abortion than it is to give birth.

This would be less of a problem if the U.S. had a health care system. Instead we seem to have a system centered on billing for health care whether we get it or not.

According to the *American Journal of Managed Care*, referencing a 2020 report from The Commonwealth Fund, “Among 11 developed countries, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate, a

relative undersupply of maternity care providers, and no guaranteed access to provider home visits or paid parental leave in the postpartum period.”

While apparently overlooking this modern evidence, Alito drew in his opinion on the words of the English barrister Sir Matthew Hale (1609–1676). We hope this does not foreshadow even more draconian decisions in the future.

We'll know we're really in trouble if Alito cites Hale's rulings in one particular 1662 trial: two women were hanged after being found guilty of witchcraft.

The more we interrogate this decision, the more arbitrary and irrational it appears to be. Why stop at 1662?

Why not go back another millennium, to the Catholic Saint Brigid of Kildare (c. 451–c. 525)? She caused the fetus of a pregnant nun to miraculously disappear.

The Alleged News®

“I Don't F'ing Care That They Have Weapons. They're Not Here To Hurt Me.”

Could a future televised Congressional hearing ever surpass the one held on Tuesday?

Sure. Nothing to it. Just swear in a witness from Alpha Centauri. Or 133 year-old Judge Crater, who mysteriously disappeared 92 years ago. How about Bat Boy, brandishing a birth certificate declaring that Hillary Clinton is his mother?

Short of something on that order, though, Tuesday had to be a high-water mark.

Granted, we had previously known that a sitting President—with one impeachment under his capacious belt already—had denied the legitimate results of the 2020 election, assembled a mob of followers at the Ellipse, and called upon them to march on the Capitol.

It was pretty damned dramatic, though, to hear Cassidy Hutchinson say that the President knew some of those in the mob were armed, and that he wanted them to retain their weapons for the confrontation to come. If that doesn't warrant a stretch at Leavenworth, what's a federal penitentiary for?

The most startling scene, though, was the Former Guy reaching out for the steering wheel of the Presidential limo, and then, thwarted, reaching for the throat of a Secret Service agent. That is absolute dystopian Hollywood gold. Lordy, let there be tapes.

It's a little surprising to think he'd take the risk. On the other hand his grasp of reality was probably too tenuous to comprehend it. As for

plates of ketchup-soaked foods being flung at the White House walls, well, who could possibly doubt that?

Biden Sued for Restarting Oil Leasing on Public Lands by Kenny Stancil

Several environmental groups sued the Biden administration on Tuesday for resuming oil and gas leasing on public lands despite ample evidence that doing so will exacerbate the fossil fuel-driven climate crisis.

The lawsuit came as the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and its Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared to hold oil and gas lease sales in Montana, North Dakota, Nevada, and Utah beginning on Wednesday—the first onshore

auctions since President Joe Biden paused the federal leasing program shortly after taking office—with more scheduled in Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Wyoming. Plaintiffs estimate that these lease sales will open more than 140,000 acres of public land to fossil fuel production.

“Overwhelming scientific evidence shows us that burning fossil fuels from existing leases on federal lands is incompatible with a livable climate,” Melissa Hornbein, senior attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center, said in a statement.

The DOI's failure to acknowledge the local and planetary impacts of these new lease sales, said Hornbein, “is an attempt to water down

the climate effects of the decision to continue leasing, and is a clear abdication of BLM's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act.”

As the plaintiffs explained in a statement:

“The groups assert that BLM has violated environmental laws by continuing to authorize fossil fuel extraction on public lands. The challenged lease sales are expected to result in billions of dollars in social and environmental harm, including negative impacts on public health, air and water quality, and local wildlife, such as the embattled greater sage grouse and other endangered

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from page one

species.

The lawsuit cites a failure of the Interior Department and BLM to uphold their responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which requires Interior to prevent “permanent impairment” and “unnecessary or undue degradation” of public lands from oil and gas development. It also calls for BLM to prepare a comprehensive environmental impact statement. That should analyze the compatibility of the predicted increased greenhouse gas emissions with the urgent need to avoid the catastrophe of 1.5° C of global warming, rather than in piecemeal analyses.

“We’re out of time and our climate can’t afford any new fossil fuel developments,” said Taylor McKinnon of the Center for Biological Diversity. “By leasing more of our public lands to oil companies, President Biden is breaking campaign

promises and falling dangerously short of the global leadership required to avoid catastrophic climate change.”

Several analyses show that continuing to exploit the world’s already-existing oil and gas fields is incompatible with meeting the Paris agreement’s goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels by the end of the century.

To avoid blowing past that threshold—beyond which the consequences of the climate emergency are projected to grow increasingly deadly, especially for the low-income populations least responsible for planet-heating pollution—governments must halt new fossil fuel projects and rapidly phase out existing production.

“Moving forward with these lease sales flies in the face of science and any chance for us to meet our climate goals,” said Dan Ritzman, director of Sierra Club’s Lands, Water, Wildlife campaign.



Obscure and entertaining oddities are getting harder and harder to find these days. Our Wandering Photographer discovered one Monday, though. On a corner of the dock where the MV Thomas Loughton ties up sits this rusty marvel: a big steel hoop and a few chain hooks support a 25-inch steel ball decorated with an open-ended hand wrench and a bit of pipe, bent and cut to look like some sort of seaweed. A small metal label, brazed or welded on, identifies the ball’s origin: the Ordinance Department Submarine Mine Depot. While a few bits of randomly-bent strapping suggest the piece has sustained some damage, its deeply pitted patina unites time and the river. Anyone know the artist?

The moratorium the White House enacted last January did not affect existing leases. The Biden administration approved 34% more permits for oil and gas drilling on public lands in its first year than the Trump administration did in 2017, prompting environmental groups to file a separate lawsuit two weeks ago.

“The public is absorbing substantial economic and ecological costs from fossil fuel-driven climate disruption, including massive fires, biodiversity loss, superstorms, and extended drought,” Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project, said Tuesday.

“Federal minerals belong to the public and should be managed in the public interest,” he added, “which clearly dictates keeping federal fossil fuel deposits safely buried underground.”

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Kenny Stancil writes for Common Dreams. This work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

Are Democrats Really Clueless About Impending Election Doom?

by Norman Mathews

Armageddon comes November 8th. Pundits and progressives have been warning Democrats for months that if they don’t change course and achieve significant legislation promised in 2020, they will go down in flames on election day, along with our democracy. The tone of these warnings is imbued with the implication that the party, and especially President Biden, either doesn’t believe this or that it is flummoxed on how to avoid the calamity. But is this case?

To buy into this misconception, one must assume that the party has no access to polls, political advisors, focus groups, and constituent complaints or that the gerontocracy currently in control simply can’t comprehend this inevitability. Time to take off the rose-colored bifocals and see the world as it really is. It’s not that the party wants to lose, it’s just that it’s not that into winning. How could this be? Isn’t winning the

ultimate goal?

One can only hypothesize about reasons for not fighting roundly to enact policies that would help it triumph. Surely, first on the list is that enacting progressive legislation would alienate Democrats’ corporate puppet masters. With their win of the presidency and both houses of congress in 2020, came the overwhelming responsibility that they must accomplish something. And this posed a serious problem—one that it created for itself during the Clinton administration when it made the Faustian bargain to skew policies away from its working-class base in favor of corporatism. This decision tied the Gordian knot that’s plagued it ever since: the cliché of having to serve two masters. Need we ask which of those won? Besides, win or lose, the money keeps pouring in.

Perhaps, on the other hand, the party simply deludes itself into thinking that voters could not be crazy enough to restore Republicans to power. But people are seething

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because nothing to better their lives is getting done. As liberal author Paul Waldman states, “Confronted with a vacuum, people will default to blaming the party in power.” The word most often used to define Democrats is “weak,” not something Americans admire. They’re more likely to prefer bad, but strong.

Could the party be thinking longterm? “We’ll take a big hit in 2022. Then the public will finally see how bad Republicans are, and we’ll roar back in 2024?” The problem here is when Republicans gain power, unlike Democrats, they use it to maximum advantage, a result that could sideline Democrats for decades.

True, with the exceptions of passing the infrastructure bill and the anemic gun-control legislation, they can blame the corrupt and recalcitrant Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. Yet, there’s always a Manchin, a Sinema, or a Joe Lieberman. Lieberman provided Obama with his excuses, but how genuine was this when one is aware that Obama selected Lieberman as his mentor when he was elected to the Senate?

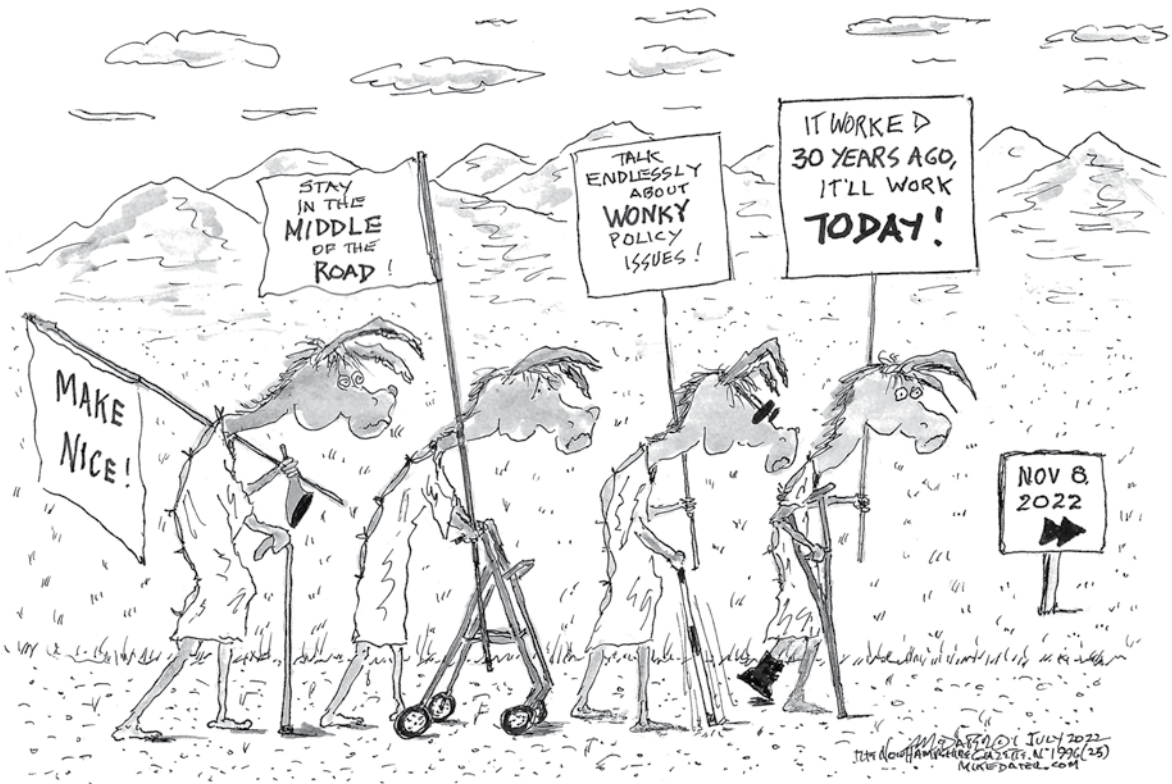
How much effort did Biden exert to sway Manchin and Sinema? He spent months negotiating with them, even after it was clear that

they were just playing him. He never once used the bully pulpit, going to their states to convince the populace that their senators were obstructing the Build Back Better plan, which would decidedly have benefitted them.

Biden ran on his prowess of being able to work with and persuade congressional members. Compare his bloodless efforts with arm-twisting Lyndon Johnson, who knew everybody’s peccadilloes, details of their love lives, and everybody’s price, whether it was new pork for their district or just a White House photo-op with their spouses. LBJ once said: “Smile and shake hands and thank everybody. Then just cut their peter off and put in your pocket.”

Even the centrist Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee knows exactly what’s happening. In their April poll, they found that in battleground districts, generic Republicans lead generic Democrats 47 percent to 39 percent, an ominous indicator for the next election. The party seems to have nothing but contempt for its base by never delivering, except incrementally, on campaign promises even when they have the votes—something the Republicans can’t be accused of.

Certainly, Rule Number One in



DNC'S WINNING STRATEGY

politics is hold onto your base. Their attitude seems to be, “Where’s the base going—to vote Republican?” Most won’t, but that ignores the fact that they can simply sit out elections. In the latest primaries, Republican turnout has been up 32 percent, while Democratic turnout declined three percent.

So what’s the Democrat’s course of action? Instead of courting the base, Democrats spend resources to sway elusive independents and “never-Trump-Republicans.” In its most perverse move, the Nancy-Pelosi-aligned House Majority PAC poured millions of primary dollars into ads promoting extreme right-wing Republicans, hoping they will provide more favorable general election matchups. Ignoring the moral implications of touting democracy-destroying candidates, what could go wrong?

Three May polls indicate that youth-voter support for Biden has dropped anywhere from 16-21 percent in the past year. The combination of millennials and Gen

Z comprises 65 million voters, the largest bloc in American history. Disillusionment is hardly a surprise, considering that Biden, who promised student-debt relief through executive order, has forgiven only that of students attending Corinthian Colleges.

Many young people are environmental activists, and again Biden has disappointed.

The death of the Build Back Better act is the most damning, but Biden has actually made things worse in some instances. For example, the Center for Biological Diversity is suing the administration for issuing more than 3,500 oil- and gas-drilling permits in New Mexico and Wyoming.

Biden, whose hair should have been on fire after the leak of the Alito memo regarding *Roe v. Wade*, tepidly remarked when the final ruling came down, “Quite a radical decision.” He’s virtually incapable of using the word abortion. Many suggested executive moves even before the final decision: enabling greater

access to abortion medication; providing resources for child care, lost wages, travel vouchers for women who must go out of state; and moving military families to obtain abortions.

For seniors, he’s refused to use patent seizures to lower drug prices and left in place large increases in Medicare premiums. Representative James Clyburn’s disingenuous “I don’t know what’s required here” is belied by the plethora of suggested remedies. It’s true that many of these executive orders could elicit law suits, but even if Biden were to lose in court, at least he’d be seen trying.

Bernie Sanders’ advisor Jeff Weaver best articulates the Democratic leadership’s goals, “to make elected progressives extinct and to extinguish the agenda of higher wages, affordable health care, criminal justice reform, addressing climate change....”

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Reluctant to mingle with unmasked potential carriers of the Variant of the Fortnight, our Wandering Photographer, theorizing that the sidewalks would be mostly empty, visited Fauxtown Monday. Theory verified.

Murph's Fortnightly Quote
“Casey is precedent on precedent, which itself is an important factor to remember.”
— Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh re: *Roe vs. Wade*, 2018 confirmation hearing

“Why did I write? Because I found life unsatisfactory.”
— Thomas Lanier “Tennessee” Williams
john@wordpraxis.com

“It’s not that the Irish are cynical. It’s rather that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody.”
— Brendan Behan
— Not-So-Random Thoughts from an Oregon Subscriber

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Thank You For Your Service
To the Editor:
Congratulations, Mary. Having reached your twelfth year as an American citizen, you are hereby required to register for the draft. No, not for Military Service, but for the U.S. Female Fertility Service. The mission of our agency is to ensure all unwanted pregnancies, especially those initiated through rape or incest, are carried to term in a manner that protects the life and wellbeing of the developing fetus.

Under U.S. law, should you become pregnant due to an unfortunate circumstance, you will be required to report to the FFS within ten working days for service as a surrogate mother on behalf of the state. During the period of your conscription, you will receive pre-natal counseling, lodging, food, medical care, legal counsel, and other support services as needed. And, as an employee of the state, you will receive a fair monthly wage in compensation for your time. Finally, upon discharge, you will be entitled to a separation bonus, tuition benefits, and follow-up services to ensure a smooth return to civilian life.

Please note that failure to register with the FFS is a felony. Also, failure report your pregnancy or acting in any way to terminate it is, by order of the U.S. Supreme Court, a violation of federal law punishable by life imprisonment.

Naturally, we hope life's circumstances will never require you to report for active duty. However, in the event you do, know your mission will be to save the life of another human being. We at the U.S. Female Fertility Service believe there is no higher calling.

Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.
Rick:
Can you tell from the prominent placement of this letter how much we have missed your mordant wit?

We only hope that we don't come to regret having published this. One never knows what humorless authoritarians might get up to, given the opportunity. If we let them get us to start self-censoring, though, they will have won already.
The Editor

Another Ewing Flight of Fancy
To the Editor:
There's no legislative purpose to the January 6 Committee. Its "Report" is a professionally produced TV propaganda extravaganza intended to smear former President Trump and prevent his 2024 re-election as President.

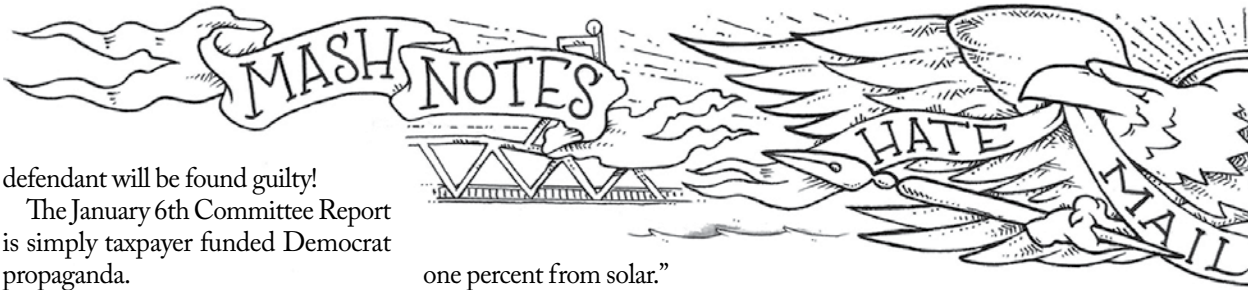
Breaking a 200-year tradition, Democrat [sic] leader Pelosi appointed all committee members, only people who voted to impeach President Trump; the Republican leader's appointees were rejected. Thus, witnesses know that perjured or incomplete anti-Trump testimony won't be exposed and that their pro- or anti-Trump claims may impact their treatment by the media, employers, prosecutors, Judges, and juries.

Why wasn't the Capitol adequately protected? The Committee refuses to investigate why President Trump's January 2, 2020 offer of 20,000 National Guard troops to protect the Capitol was refused despite known threats of violence, expected large crowds, and Capitol Police pleas for help before January 6th.

A veteran ABC "Nightline" producer created the committee's one-sided TV "Report," with members reading scripts from Teleprompters. Evidence allegedly condemning former President Trump was cherry-picked from 1,000 witnesses and 140,000 documents. No contrary evidence is provided. No evidence is challenged. E.g., Chairman Thompson's proven false, inflammatory claim that police died on January 6th defending the Capitol remained unchallenged; only unarmed protestors died at the Capitol on January 6th.

In a jury trial Prosecutor's opening statements couldn't be as dishonest as the January 6th Committee "Report"; prosecutors know that Defense Attorneys will expose their omissions and tear their lies to shreds.

The January 6th Committee allows no Republican selected representatives to question witnesses to expose lies and biases, to present contrary and exculpatory evidence or theories, or to expose other misinformation. Under these circumstances every innocent



defendant will be found guilty!
The January 6th Committee Report is simply taxpayer funded Democrat propaganda.

Don Ewing
Meredith, N.H.
Don:
We can understand your jealousy, seeing the Democratic Party finally employ a few PR techniques that have come so naturally to Republicans since Richard "The Crook" Nixon first hired Roger Ailes. Perhaps you have forgotten, but it was Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy who decided to cede the field to Democrats—and the only two Republicans in Congress with any balls.

Your claim that "Trump's January 2, 2020 offer of 20,000 National Guard troops to protect the Capitol was refused" is, of course, bogus. The source for that claim appears to be Sean Hannity, from whom no one should buy a used car or bridge.

Your whine that "only unarmed protestors died at the Capitol on January 6th" suggests you've been listening to Newsmax's Greg Kelly. His grasp of reality makes Hannity look like Diogenes.

We look forward to hearing your excuses for the thug who tried to grab the wheel of "The Beast" on January 6th, apparently bent on personally leading a violent overthrow of the government.
The Editor

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The Math Doesn't Add Up
To the Editor:
Electricity rates in New Hampshire are about to double. Readers should ask why.

The following was posted by the New Hampshire Department of Energy: "According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), over half of New Hampshire's electricity generation is from nuclear energy. Approximately 25 percent is generated by natural gas while seven percent is generated by hydropower, six percent is produced by biomass, three percent is wind, 1.6 percent coal, and about

one percent from solar."

While the price of natural gas has increased by two and a half times from a year ago, it is only a quarter of the supply. Has the cost of producing nuclear, wind, hydro, biomass or solar increased?

Isn't it time Governor Sununu and his handpicked members of the State's Public Utility Commission represented New Hampshire consumers instead of greedy corporations?

Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth N.H.
Walter:
Do you realize what you're asking? Utility companies have run roughshod over ratepayers in this state since early in the last century. It should come as no surprise that they do so now.

This is not to say you're wrong. We, as a people, have just become so accustomed to getting the short end of the stick that we've lost the habit of demanding that which is our right.
The Editor

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Calling on Washington and Concord for Gas Tax Relief

To the Editor:
Why are today's gas prices so high? That's a great question—to which we've seen a variety of answers. Some blame it on corporate greed, pointing to high oil company profits. Others think of it as a supply problem, created by Russia when it invaded Ukraine. And there's the argument that it's a demand issue; in our post-pandemic world folks started traveling again, so demand outpaced supply, pushing prices up.

It seems these three factors go a long way to explaining today's high gas prices. Those who accuse Joe Biden of single-handedly causing this global economic phenomenon overlook these causes. They also dismiss his decision to release a portion of our Stra-

tegic Petroleum Reserve as a means of keeping prices from rising even higher.

Taxation is another factor that influences gas prices. President Biden has just called for a federal gas tax holiday. We're seeing arguments that this is just a gimmick; that oil companies, not consumers, will benefit from such a move. Maybe so. But we could couple a tax holiday with a crack-down on any price gouging that might follow. An anti-gouging bill recently passed in the U.S. House. A related bill, sponsored by Maggie Hassan, is awaiting Senate action. I'd sure like to see Congress approve this legislation—and support the President's tax holiday—to help lower our cost at the pumps.

Finally, some states have reduced or suspended their own gasoline taxes, but New Hampshire has not. Our Governor and Executive Council, our State Senate and House of Representatives should take action to help us out during this crisis so we can drive to work, get out for groceries, maybe even travel for a summer vacation—without needing to take out a loan every time we fill-up!

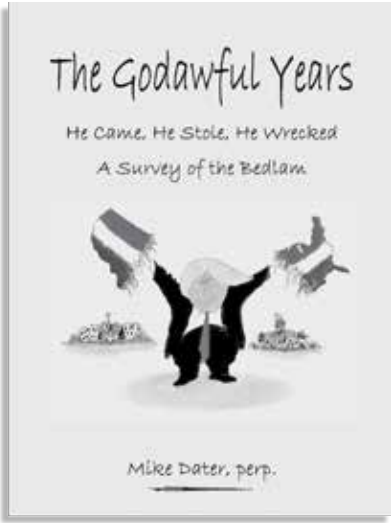
David Wessel
New Durham, N.H.
David:
Here's a random thought plucked out of the ether: what if the Pentagon cut its use of gasoline by about ten percent? That would free up 1.26 million gallons of fuel per day.
The Editor

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Kick the Republican Bums Out
Dear Editor,

The Supreme Court's decision allowing states to prohibit abortion is cruel and repressive. Women, and their men, who can't raise a child are being forced to do so. How does that honor the life of the child?

The Court's decision to prohibit

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states from regulating the carrying of guns in public spaces is insane. The Second Amendment is being worshiped at the expense of our children's lives. How does that honor life?

The Court has become politically partisan because Senate Republicans blocked Obama's legitimate nominee, Merrick Garland, and installed three of their own ideologues. Republicans continue supporting trump's [sic] baseless, false claims of a "stolen election" while installing partisans in local voting offices to steal the next election. That is treason against our democracy.

We can repair these threats to our lives by voting Democrat, overwhelmingly, in November.

It's time to kick the Republican bums out.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

We're not going to hold our breath waiting for Merrick Garland to rip off his shirt to reveal a big red "S".

That said, we'd much rather have seen him on the court than any of the yahoos Trump appointed.

As to your main point, yes, absolutely—it's always time to kick the Republican bums out.

The Editor

Cue the Revolutionary Protein

To the Editor,
I was happy to learn the San Francisco-based company Eat Just is planning to build the world's biggest cultivated-meat factory in the United States. For those who don't know, cultivated meat is grown from animal cells, without slaughter. The planned facility will have ten 250,000-liter bioreactors, capable of producing 30-million pounds of this revolutionary protein every year.
Despite such amazing progress in

the private sector, more federal funding for cellular-agriculture research is necessary to help make cultivated-meat competitive with the price of its slaughtered counterpart. Cultivated meat is better for the environment, public health and animals. Our senators should support this nascent industry, which has the potential to do so much good.

Jon Hochschartner
Granby, Conn.

Yet More Ewing, Posing as Reasonable

To the Editor:
The Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* (Roe); the lying about the decision has begun. This decision does **not** outlaw all abortions; according to the *New York Times* about 87 percent of abortions will be unaffected (the rest will be available in other states). This decision is **not** anti-democratic; it leaves control of abortions to be decided democratically by the people of each state and their representatives.

Each state's decisions can evolve as the people consider the related competing interests: a woman's, the baby's, and the state's/society's. For example, has killing 63 million babies promoted a healthy society and respect for life or does it contribute to today's high crime, suicide, and drug use rates?

The states where the citizens want the skulls of full-term, healthy babies to be crushed as they are being born will still allow it. States wanting underage, and perhaps molested, girls to get abortions without parental consent, will still allow it.

Most states will probably continue to have laws that are similar to what the Roe decision allowed; abortions will be available for a period of time, typically before the baby could live outside the womb. Each state will decide about parental notification, rape, incest, public funding, healthcare re-

quirements to ensure safe abortions, etc.

Even abortions supporters like Ruth Bader Ginsberg agreed that the Roe decision was poor. Dissenters from today's decision identify no Constitutional Right to abortion.

Bi-partisan support existed/exists in Congress for a Constitutional, nationwide law enacting Roe. The Democrat leadership's very radical abortion bill was defeated by a bi-partisan vote.

Nationwide, today's Supreme Court decision returns abortion decisions to the people and their representatives; abortion in New Hampshire is unaffected.

Don Ewing
Meredith, N.H.

Don:
We can see you're really trying to appear reasonable here, but your straw man argument is still fatuous. No, all abortions have not been outlawed. Nobody said they had been. It's clear enough, though, that the self-proclaimed righteous will not rest until they have.

The Supreme Court's action will have its greatest effect on the most vulnerable among us—poor Black women in the South. Last we heard, that sort of thing went against the teachings of some guy who lived in Palestine a long time ago.

"Each state's decisions can evolve..." That's rich. The "States Rights" argument justified slavery and led to a Civil War.

Besides, given recent trends, evolution seems to have been cancelled, while devolution is rising. Haven't you seen that photo of a grinning Mitch McConnell standing in front of a Confederate flag? Any day now the Heritage Foundation or the American Enterprise Institute is going to crank out a White Paper asking, "Was Chattel Slavery Really As Bad As All That?"

Some of our staff raise an eyebrow at your letters, but we thank you for sending them. You seem to believe in what you write. Perhaps some day we'll figure out why.

The Editor

holding our signs expressing our feelings, and families having to untimely bury their loved ones, but our abstract treasure—democracy—needs noticing and protecting. The January 6th Congressional hearings are about that. Presidential misbehavior matters.

Lynn Rudmin Chong
Sanbornton, N.H.

Through the Looking Glass

"When the wise man points at the moon,
the fool looks at his finger."
—Lao-tzu

And it doesn't take a philosopher to notice that there's no shortage of fools in this country these days, walking around in combat ammo, openly packing assault rifles, wearing Glock's to the barber shop: "Hey, look at me, I've got balls!" Even the women, for goodness sake. Or the folks who believe a woman's body is none of her business, and women on public assistance are freeloading Welfare Queens, teaching our children the actual history of slavery is un-American, and gay pride is abomination, violent insurrection to halt the peaceful transfer of power is legitimate public discourse, and half the nation is ready to vote again for the grifter who won't admit that he lost. Speaking of which, what about that "big, beautiful wall" Mexico was going to pay for to keep their dealers and rapists out? And wearing masks to prevent the spread of Covid clearly violates my right to be stupid. Meanwhile, the whole planet is bubbling away like a pot on a stove on high, and the cook's asleep at the wheel. I know, I know, a mixed metaphor. And I have to admit this isn't much of a poem, but at least I can see the moon; it's up there, grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

—W.D. Ehrhart

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Bill Boone eats very little meat and avoids expensive gourmet foods altogether.

Corporations may try to blame the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine for astronomical price increases, but that's merely a cover story for shameless price gouging that's left millions of Americans struggling to survive.

"It's all these brands," Boone, who worked at Reynolds and Alcoa, said of the rampant price hikes. "It's all the basic things people have in their homes, like salt and pepper. I feel badly for these families with three and four kids."

As struggling Americans burn through their savings and scrimp on meals to make ends meet, companies that jacked up prices on everything from cereal to toiletries post ever-higher profits.

While parents take second jobs and even hire out their children as movers and gardeners to make extra money, CEOs brag about the exploitation that's enabling them to pad their own pockets and shower shareholders with dividends.

"A little bit of inflation is always good in our business," declared Rodney McMullen, CEO of Kroger, which raised prices on customers like Boone before raking in \$1.5 billion in operating profits for the first quarter this year.

Procter & Gamble, manufacturer of diapers and other essentials, plans to raise prices throughout the year even though it's forecasting higher

Not even President Joe Biden's public shaming of oil companies was enough to curb their unprecedented profit-mongering. They still refuse to increase production, even as the average cost of a gallon of gas hovers around \$5 and truckers like Boone's son-in-law spend hundreds of dollars to fill up their rigs.

Thanks to Boone's union pension, he and his wife, Carolyn, can cope with padded grocery bills. But the surging prices are breaking families already living on the margins.

During the third week of June, for example, Robert P. Ford Jr. rushed to the grocery store in Akron, Ohio, and purchased emergency supplies for a woman and her teenage daughter who were living in their car.

The woman's \$10-an-hour job could no longer sustain the two of them in the face of crushing inflation, and they lost their rented home amid the mounting costs for food and other basic necessities.

"I've been doing this since 2018, and this is the worst I've seen it," Ford said of the poverty he combats through his nonprofit, Forever R Children.

"Companies make any kind of excuse to raise prices on everything. Toilet paper has gone up. Toothpaste has gone up. Deodorant has gone up. Bacon is skyrocketing," added Ford, a member of USW Local 2L and a production worker at Goodyear in Akron. "It's corporate greed."

The number of families served by his mobile food pantry more than

quadrupled in the past month alone. Many struggle to afford the cereals, canned soups and other kinds of staples made by General Mills, which increased prices five times over the past year and ratcheted up some items by as much as 20 percent.

The company tried to blame higher production costs and supply chain problems, among other issues.

Yet General Mills amassed \$844 million in operating profits during the first quarter of its 2022 fiscal year, and it's provided shareholders with \$375 million in stock buybacks over the past couple of years. Like many other companies, it's raising prices just because it can.

The growing number of food pantry clients isn't the only measure Ford has of inflation's toll.

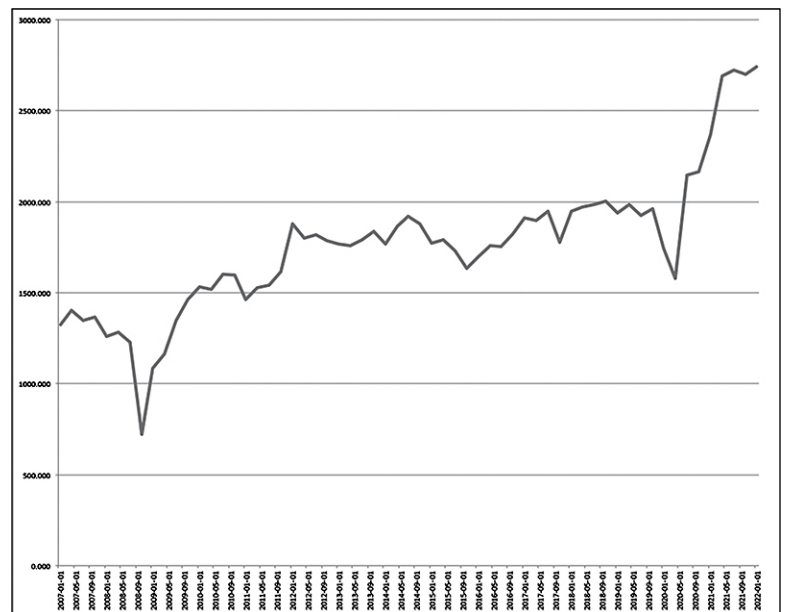
He sees more and more people lugging groceries home to save on gas. And a growing number, like the mother and daughter he just helped, have no roof over their heads at all as inflation fuels homelessness—including first-time homelessness—in communities across the country.

"They can't even take all the food I'm offering them," he said, noting homeless clients want items they can eat on the go because they lack access to ovens and microwaves. "They're not even turning the corner, and they're popping that can of ravioli and tossing it down their throat."

As much as they need food, these clients also seek places to bathe.

“When you lose your home, you lose your water,” observed Ford, who recently secured a bus with the help of donations and now hopes to assemble a group of union workers to help him outfit it with showers. Then he’ll take his “community shower bus” on the road along with his mobile food pantry.

Along with all the other items costing more at grocery stores these days, Boone recently realized how much the price of baloney—the mainstay of his packed lunches



"Where could this inflation possibly be coming from," ask the professionally-bewildered news anchors. Well, it's not as if the powers that be can hide everything. Produced using data from the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, this chart shows corporate profits from the first quarter of 2007 through the first quarter of 2022. The downward spike on the left shows the temporary drop which resulted from the creative fiscal shenanigans of Wall Street hoodlums, aided by their comrades in Congress. Not shown: the homelessness and despair suffered by millions of innocent Americans. The downward spike on the right shows the drop in corporate profits caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Not shown: the deaths of hundreds of thousands, caused by corporate pressure to "return to normal."

during decades of shift work—also had gone up.

And that made him angry all over again with well-heeled executives and investors who will squeeze ordinary Americans at every possible turn.

"It's just despicable how working people get treated," he said.

—≈—
Tom Conway is the international president of the United Steelworkers Union (USW).

The USW was established May 22, 1942, in Cleveland, Ohio, through the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) by a convention of representatives from the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, after almost six years of divisive struggles to create a new union

of steelworkers. The drive to create this union included such violent incidents as the infamous Memorial Day, 1937, when Chicago policemen supporting the rival American Federation of Labor (AFL) fired on workers outside a Republic Steel mill and killed 10 men.

The founder and first president of the USW, Philip Murray, led the union through its first organizing drives and its first decade, when the workers of USW went on strike several times to win the right to bargain collectively with steel companies.

Significant job actions of the USW include the 1952 steel strike, the steel strike of 1959, the 1974 Elliot Lake miners strike, and the steel strike of 1986. – Wikipedia

—≈—
This article was produced by the Independent Media Institute.

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How Vietnam got under America's callused cowboy skin

by Jean Stimmell

Because America chose to wage a war in Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh was exiled from his country and ended up a renowned spiritual teacher and peacemaker, instrumental in mellowing our macho culture.

It was even more of a turnaround for Ocean Vuong, the acclaimed writer and poet: He tells us he literally wouldn't exist without the Vietnam War. That's because his grandfather, an American soldier fighting in Vietnam, met his grandmother, "a girl from the rice paddies,"¹ and married her.

And then, there's me: a hapless 19-year-old who stumbled into Vietnam after dropping out of college. I enlisted before the big Vietnam protests, yet with major reservations about the war. But I had more pressing concerns about disappointing my father, a combat veteran of WW II, and my Pittsfield peers, if I did not emulate that manly icon of my generation, John Wayne.

In different ways, all our lives were forged by war—and still are.

Sometimes it takes cultural outsiders to expose our societal blind-spots—to show us how things really are. As Vuong reminds us in a podcast with the Native American writer, Tommy Orange, "America

is literally a product of war, starting with the stolen land we are now standing on."²

This became more evident to Vuong after he started writing: he couldn't help noticing that even the building blocks of his craft, the words he was using, reflected a war mentality: "I owned that workshop. I killed it, right? I smashed him. I went into that novel guns blazing." He tells Tommy Orange, "Here we are, our one moment to create something on our own terms, and the only tools we have—we are so deprived as a culture—that the only tools we have are the tools of death."³

It seems extreme to say that the instruments of death are all we've got. Yet, all we have to do is look around.

We've lost, to date, one million of our fellow Americans to Covid, yet Congress refuses to approve the money to prepare for the next pandemic—which is sure to come. Climate Catastrophe is descending on us, the ultimate grim reaper, but no one seems to be worried, and Congress seems oblivious. Conversely, our tools of death are ever-ready, always on hair-trigger alert.

We are witnessing a perfect example right now: when Russia invaded Ukraine, our government was able

to rush billions of dollars in military equipment immediately, no questions asked. All of us support Ukraine, but shouldn't equal attention be spent on the tools of life, like massive diplomatic efforts to end the killing?

Sadly, though, war is all we know.

George Lakoff tells us why in his now classic book, *Metaphors We Live By*. He explains that metaphors are fundamental to how we think: we use metaphors to structure what we perceive, how we think, and what we do. In the case of America, he convincingly shows how "war" has become the dominant metaphor of our times.

"It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground.... It is in this sense that the 'argument is war' metaphor is one that we live by in this culture."⁴

When we look into it, as Ocean Vuong has done, it is frightening how much of our language is based on the war metaphor and its evil twin: our free-market economy with its "survival of the fittest" mentality.

Carol Pearson, in *The Hero Within*, points out the tragic nature of living



A convoy of cargo boats on the Mekong River in Vietnam, June, 1966.

in an over-ripe warrior society, as we do today: extreme polarization, massive inequality, citizens armed to the teeth, and bodies of mass shootings piling up higher each day. She suggests a more humane approach:

"But what if we simply shift our expectations a bit? What if the goal of life is not to prevail, but simply to learn? Then the end of the story can seem very different; and so can what happens in between birth and death. Heroism is redefined as not only moving mountains but knowing mountains: being fully oneself and seeing without denial, what is, and being open to learning the lessons life offers us."⁵

That's the life-giving lesson that refugees like Thich Nhat Hanh and

Ocean Vuong have brought with them to our shores, and it's a way of life that I have tried to live up to after my own baptism in war.

1 <https://onbeing.org/programs/ocean-vuong-a-life-worthy-of-our-breath-2022/#transcript>

2 <https://www.cityarts.net/event/ocean-vuong/>

3 Ibid.

4 Lakoff, George & Johnson Mark, *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1980. P. 4

5 *The Hero Within*, by Carol Pearson, pp. 9-10; "How Vietnam got under America's callused cowboy skin."

The Healthcare Industry's Medical Debt Rip-Off

by Jim Hightower

Too many big business CEOs turn out to be grifters, ripping off consumers, workers, and others. But the corporate con artists I consider most vile are those who profiteer on people's healthcare needs.

We've had such infamous, high-profile scammers as Medicare fraudster Rick Scott, Big Pharma price gouger Martin Shkreli, and the Sackler family of opioid pushers. Worse, though, we now face an industrywide epidemic of insurers, hospitals, and others that are both pushing higher costs onto patients, then systematically pushing those who can't pay the full inflated tab into debt schemes. With bloated interest charges, payments go on for

years, and medical bankruptcies are soaring.

The most significant statistic in today's avaricious world of healthcare finance is this: Half of U.S. adults don't have the money to cover a \$500 medical bill. Thus, as the system keeps jacking up its prices and profits, millions of families are forced by illness or injury into the dark valley of debt, inhabited by ruthless debt collectors employed by the medical establishment. But wait, you say, I have health insurance! Still, ever-rising prices and out-of-pocket insurance requirements put you into debt, too. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that 6 out of 10 working-age adults with health coverage went into medical debt in the past five years.

Most perversely, healthcare debt prevents many people from getting health care. One in seven Americans say the corporate system has refused care to them because they have unpaid medical bills, and two-thirds say they've put off care because of the fear of crushing debt. As one expert puts it: "The No. 1 reason—and the No. 2, 3, and 4 reasons—that people go into medical debt is they don't have the money. It's not complicated."

Populist author, public speaker, and radio commentator Jim Hightower writes "The Hightower Lowdown," a monthly newsletter chronicling the ongoing fights by America's ordinary people against rule by plutocratic elites. Sign up at HightowerLowdown.org.



Valerian, former Emperor of Rome [253–260], being used as a footstool by Shapur I, Shabanshab of the Sasanian Empire, after Valerian's defeat at the Battle of Edessa. By Hans Holbein the Younger, circa 1521.

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