

PART III
POLITICAL
ISSUES

POVERTY AND THE LEFT

The privations and sufferings of the poor have long been central themes in the vision of the political left. That is what attracted many of us to the left in our youth. But the actual consequences of the agenda of the left on the poor—and on others—is what eventually drove many of us to the right.

Most of the leading opponents of the left, in the United States and around the world, began on the left. These include Ronald Reagan, Milton Friedman and the whole neo-conservative movement, as well as Raymond Aron in France and Friedrich Hayek in Austria. There is no comparable exodus from the right to the left.

Why is this so? The favorite explanation by those who remain on the left is that their former comrades “sold out.” But nobody sells out to the lowest bidder. The real money, for intellectuals at least, is overwhelmingly on the left. Black intellectuals, especially, can easily earn six-figure incomes just from lecture fees alone at colleges and universities around the country.

All it takes are some heated accusations of “racism” against whites and denunciations of American society in general, with perhaps a few antisemitic remarks thrown in for good measure. Nowhere can you make more money with less effort or ability. By contrast, there is very little demand for conserva-

tive speakers—black or white—on campus, and the few who show up are likely to be heckled or shouted down.

Nor are journalism or the arts havens for conservatives. Far from it. Whatever blacklist existed against Communists and their fellow-travelers in Hollywood during the McCarthy era, it has been completely outstripped by the blacklisting or intimidation of conservatives there now.

If the exodus from the left is not due to people selling out to the lowest bidder, then what does cause it?

Let us go back to the poor. Why are we concerned about them? Some are concerned lest the poor have inadequate food, shelter or other basic requirements for life. Others are concerned because of the inequalities, disparities or “gaps” that they represent. And still others are concerned because the poor can serve as a rationale for increasing the political power of the left.

Those who are primarily concerned about the well-being of the poor are likely to discover over time that much of the agenda of the left does not really do much good for the poor, and some of that agenda—environmental extremism, for example—actually makes the poor worse off.

Meanwhile, nothing has a track record of lifting millions of people from poverty to prosperity like a free market economy. Most officially “poor” Americans today have things that middle-class Americans of an earlier time could only dream about—including color TV, videocassette recorders, microwave ovens, and their own cars. Moreover, half of all poor households have air-conditioning.

Leftist redistribution of income could never accomplish that, because there are simply not enough rich people for their wealth to have such a dramatic effect on the living standards of the poor, even if it was all confiscated and redistributed. Moreover, many attempts at redistributing wealth in various

countries around the world have ended up redistributing poverty.

After all, rich people can see the political handwriting on the wall, and can often take their money and leave the country, long before a government program can get started to confiscate it. They are also likely to take with them skills and entrepreneurial experience that are even harder to replace than the money.

For those of us whose main concern is the well-being of ordinary people, it is a no-brainer to abandon the left as soon as we acquire enough knowledge about what actually happens, as distinguished from what leftist theories say will happen.

It is a very different story for those on the left whose goal is either a self-righteous sense of superiority or the political power with which to express their self-infatuation by imposing their vision on others. Here the poor are a means to an end. These kinds of leftists show remarkably little interest in the creation of wealth, which has raised living standards for the poor, as compared to their obsession with redistribution, which has not.

These kinds of leftists concentrate on inequalities that can be dealt with by turning money and power over to people like themselves. These kinds of leftists will never desert the cause that serves them so well, no matter how badly it serves others.

“USEFUL IDIOTS”

Lenin is supposed to have referred to blind defenders and apologists for the Soviet Union in the Western democracies as “useful idiots.” Yet even Lenin might have been surprised at how far these useful idiots would carry their partisanship in later years—including our own times.

Stalin’s man-made famine in the Soviet Union during the 1930s killed more millions of people than Hitler killed in the Holocaust—and Mao’s man-made famine in China killed more millions than died in the USSR. Yet we not only hear little or nothing about either of these staggering catastrophes in the Communist world today, very little was said about them in the Western democracies while they were going on. Indeed, many useful idiots denied that there were famines in the Soviet Union or in Communist China.

The most famous of these was the *New York Times*’ Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty, who won a Pulitzer prize for telling people what they wanted to hear, rather than what was actually happening. Duranty assured his readers that “there is no famine or actual starvation, nor is there likely to be.” Moreover, he blamed reports to the contrary on “rumor factories” with anti-Soviet bias.

It was decades later before the first serious scholarly study of that famine was written, by Robert Conquest of the Hoover

Institution, always identified in politically correct circles as “right-wing.” Yet when the Soviets’ own statistics on the deaths during the famine were finally released, under Mikhail Gorbachev, they showed that the actual deaths exceeded even the millions estimated by Dr. Conquest.

Official statistics on the famine deaths in China under Mao have never been released, but knowledgeable estimates run upwards of 20 million people. Yet, even here, there were the same bland denials by sympathizers and fellow travellers in the West as during the earlier Soviet famine. One celebrated “expert” on China wrote: “I saw no starving people in China, nothing that looked like old-time famines.” Horrifying as the pre-Communist famines were, they never killed as many people as Mao’s famine did.

Today, even after the evidence of massive man-made famines in the Communist world, after Solzhenitsyn’s revelations about the gulags and after the horrors of the killing fields of Cambodia, the useful idiots continue to deny or downplay staggering human tragedies under Communist dictatorships. Or else they engage in moral equivalence, as *Newsweek* editor and TV pundit Eleanor Clift did during the Elian Gonzalez controversy, when she said: “To be a poor child in Cuba may in many instances be better than being a poor child in Miami and I’m not going to condemn their lifestyle so gratuitously.”

Apparently totalitarian dictatorship is just a lifestyle, like wearing sandals and beads and using herbal medicine. It apparently has not occurred to Eleanor Clift to ask why poor people in Miami do not put themselves and their children on flimsy boats, in a desperate effort to reach Cuba.

Elian Gonzalez and his mother were only the latest of millions of people to flee Communist dictatorships at the risk of their lives. Some were shot trying to get past the Berlin wall and hundreds of thousands of “boat people” were drowned

trying to escape a Communist Vietnam that many useful idiots were celebrating from inside free democracies. Many who escaped from the Soviet Union to the West during the Second World War were sent back by American authorities, except for those who committed suicide rather than go back.

Yet none of this has really registered on a very large segment of the intelligentsia in the West. Nor are Western capitalists immune to the same blindness. The owner of the Baltimore Orioles announced that he would not hire baseball players who defect from Cuba, because this would be an “insult” to Castro. TV magnate Ted Turner has sponsored a TV mini-series on the Cold War that has often taken the moral-equivalence line.

Turner’s instruction to the historian who put this series together was that he wanted no “triumphalism,” meaning apparently no depiction of the triumph of democracy over Communism. Various scholars who have specialized in the study of Communist countries have criticized the distortions in this mini-series in a recently published book titled *CNN’s Cold War Documentary*, edited by Arnold Beichman.

Meanwhile, that moral-equivalence mini-series is being spread through American schools from coast to coast, as if to turn our children into the useful idiots of the future.

FACTS VERSUS DOGMA ON GUNS

For years, the tragic shooting of President Reagan's press secretary James Brady has been exploited politically by gun-control advocates. Federal gun-control legislation has been called "the Brady bill." Yet there was scarcely a peep from the liberal media when it was announced recently that the man who shot Brady—John Hinkley—will be allowed furloughs from the mental hospital in which he has been kept.

Unfortunately, this is a classic liberal pattern—remarkably little concern over those particular people who actually commit crimes with guns, combined with ferocious crusades against law-abiding citizens who own firearms.

Furloughs, parole, probation or lenient sentences for violent criminals do not alarm the liberals. What alarms them is the thought that people who have never shot anybody might be able to have a gun in their home or business to protect themselves against the kinds of armed criminals that liberals allow to walk the streets.

Liberal dogma on gun control is like liberal dogma on so many other issues: Ordinary people cannot be trusted to look out for themselves, but must be put under the thumb of wiser and nobler people—such as liberals—through strict government regulations. According to the gun-control zealots, we will shoot each other in the heat of arguments if we have guns.

Automobile accidents will lead to gunfire between angry drivers.

In other words, innocent people cannot be trusted with firearms. Far better to leave them helpless against armed criminals.

It is bad enough that liberals have this vision of the world. What is worse is that the liberal media will consistently ignore or suppress any facts which contradict that vision.

A massive empirical study by John Lott of the University of Chicago Law School shows the direct opposite of virtually everything in the liberal vision of gun control. Rising rates of gun ownership in particular counties across the country have almost invariably been followed immediately by falling rates of violent crimes in those counties.

This should not be a surprise to anyone. Violent criminals prefer helpless victims, not people who can shoot them full of holes. But where have you seen this empirical study mentioned in the media? Its title is *More Guns, Less Crime*.

In those European countries where citizens almost never have guns, burglaries are far more common than in the United States, and the burglars do not spend nearly as much time casing the place before breaking in. Similarly, in those American communities where liberal politicians have long had tight control, law-abiding citizens are similarly disarmed and similarly vulnerable.

As for the gunplay that would supposedly follow every fender-bender on the highway, John Lott has been able to find only one example. Two truckers had an accident and one was giving a brutal, bone-breaking beating to the other, until the second trucker pulled out a gun and opened fire, probably saving his own life.

Even in counties where a high percentage of the people are armed, bullets are not flying hither and yon on the high-

ways—or anywhere else. There are usually far more shootings in places where the criminals know that ordinary citizens are unlikely to be able to shoot back.

Isolated incidents of accidental death from guns are inevitable in a country of more than a quarter of a billion people, just as there are accidental deaths from swimming pools, ski runs, wild animals and other causes. But only accidental gunshot deaths are played up big in the media. The larger numbers of lives saved by armed citizens protecting themselves and their families are seldom reported, much less weighed against the isolated gunshot accidents.

If our concern is for the safety of decent, law-abiding people, then all the facts need to be considered. But nothing that undermines the gun-controllers' vision is likely to be reported when the mass media show more concern for protecting liberal dogma than for protecting people.

In the media, it is all presented as a story of humanitarian efforts by the good guys to save lives against the evil resistance of the National Rifle Association. In the media, James Brady is repeatedly put on the screen when the issue comes up. Meanwhile, the man who shot Brady gets furloughs and nobody cares.

GLOBAL HOT AIR

A new political dogma is being spun in the media. “Science,” they say, has now “proved” that global warming is a real danger and that human beings are responsible for it, so that we need to take drastic steps to reduce greenhouse gasses. This has been the widespread response to a recent publication by the National Academy of Sciences, which many in the media have taken as proof that we need to follow the drastic requirements of the Kyoto accords, in order to reduce the threat of global warming.

There were some pretty heavy-weight scientists involved in the NAS discussions of the global warming issue. But, as the report itself stated clearly, these scientists not only did not write the report, they didn’t even see it before it was published. They “were not asked to endorse the conclusions or recommendations nor did they see the final draft of the report before its release.”

So much for “science” having “proved” global warming and its human causation. Scientists were used as window dressing for a report made by government officials. Moreover, even that report was unable to claim unanimity among scientists on the global warming issue, though some in the media seem to think that it did.

The stampede toward draconian changes in our economy

and in the whole American way of life is all too congenial to the mindset of the intelligentsia in general and the liberal media in particular. Anything that requires their superior wisdom and virtue to be imposed by government on the benighted masses has a favorable reception waiting in those quarters.

Back in the 1970s, the hysteria was about global cooling and the prospect of a new ice age. A National Academy of Sciences report back then led *Science* magazine to conclude in its March 1, 1975 issue that a long “ice age is a real possibility.” According to the April 28, 1975 issue of *Newsweek*, “the earth’s climate seems to be cooling down.”

A note of urgency was part of the global cooling hysteria then as much as it is part of today’s global warming hysteria. According to the February 1973 issue of *Science Digest*, “Once the freeze starts, it will be too late.”

Nothing is easier than to come up with mathematical models and doomsday scenarios. Politicians and government bureaucrats have been trying for well over a decade to sell a doomsday scenario of global warming, which would enhance the power of—you guessed it—politicians and bureaucrats.

Among scientists specializing in the study of weather and climate, there are many differences of opinion, reflecting the complex and uncertain data. Among the prominent scientists who do not go along with the global warming hysteria are Richard S. Lindzen, who is professor of meteorology at MIT, and Dr. S. Fred Singer, who created the American weather satellite system and whose book, *Hot Talk, Cold Science*, is must reading for those who want scientific facts rather than a political stampede.

Although Professor Lindzen is one of the big names listed in the National Academy of Sciences report, he disagrees with the global warming hysteria. As Professor Lindzen notes, “the climate is always changing.” Innumerable factors go into tem-

perature changes and many of these factors, such as the changing amounts of heat put out by the sun during different eras, are beyond the control of human beings.

Certain gasses, such as carbon dioxide, have the potential to affect temperatures, but that is very different from saying that a particular rise in temperature during a particular era is necessarily due to “greenhouse gasses.” A major part of the rising temperature over the past century took place before World War II—which was also before the large increase in carbon dioxide emissions in our time.

The National Academy of Sciences report itself tiptoes around the fact that the timing of temperature increases does not coincide with the timing of increases in greenhouse gasses. As the NAS report puts it: “The causes of these irregularities and the disparities in timing are not completely understood.”

Even if we were to cripple our economy by carrying out the radical steps proposed in the Kyoto accords, this “would not result in a substantial reduction in global warming,” according to Professor Lindzen. He laments the use of science “as a source of authority with which to bludgeon political opponents and propagandize uninformed citizens.” Unfortunately, many of those uninformed citizens are in the media.

“CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM” FOLLIES

To crusaders for “campaign finance reform,” as with many other political crusaders, the facts simply do not matter. What matters is their vision—and winning. Facts can be left to others.

Most of the arguments for campaign finance reform cannot stand up to the facts. Take the notion that, without government regulation of campaign contributions, people with big money will simply “buy the election.” What are the facts?

The long list of rich people who became political candidates and lost, despite spending big bucks out of their own pockets, goes back as far as William Randolph Hearst and comes forward to Ross Perot and Steve Forbes. When the Republicans won control of the House of Representatives in 1994, for the first time in 40 years, the average winning Republican candidate spent less than the Democrat he defeated. Then, eight years later, when the Democrats staged a comeback and reduced the Republican majority, their spending averaged less than that of the Republicans.

What about the notion that the big money will always back conservative or pro-business candidates, giving one side of the political spectrum an unfair advantage at the polls? Big

campaign money contributors have bankrolled political icons of the left from William Jennings Bryan to Bob LaFollette and Hiram Johnson in a bygone era to Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern in a later era. Hollywood millionaires were among Bill Clinton's biggest supporters and billionaire Ted Turner bankrolls left-wing causes.

What about the much-touted "quid pro quo" sought by "special interests"? Does this produce "the best politicians money can buy," as claimed by campaign finance crusaders? Here we run into a chicken and egg problem. Do contributors generally contribute to elected officials who already espouse positions they like or do the politicians take their positions in order to attract money?

Since there is money available on both sides of most issues, it is by no means an open and shut case that positions are generally taken just in order to attract money. A Congressman who votes in favor of drilling for oil in Alaska may get contributions from the oil industry but, if he voted to oppose oil drilling in Alaska, he could get money from the Sierra Club.

According to House minority leader Richard Gephardt: "What we have is two important values in direct conflict: freedom of speech and our desire for healthy campaigns in a healthy democracy." Whatever Congressman Gephardt's definition of a "healthy" campaign, it is not part of the Constitution of the United States—and free speech is.

Across a whole spectrum of institutions, free speech is being stifled so that the politically correct vision of the left can prevail, as it does in our educational system from the kindergarten to the graduate schools. It is the same story in most of the media. When a homosexual is murdered by anti-gay hoodlums, that is big news from coast to coast, but when two homosexuals capture, rape and kill a teenage boy, that story seldom sees the light of day.

Campaign finance restrictions reduce the chances of letting the public hear anything that has not been filtered through the liberal media and the liberal academic establishment.

What have been the actual consequences of previous campaign finance laws? A scholarly study of such laws—*Unfree Speech* by William A. Smith—concludes that they affect the channels through which money reaches political campaigns, rather than the total amount of money.

Lots of innocent people have been caught in legal technicalities created by a tangle of red tape regulations, while the organized special interests continue to pour millions of dollars through the loopholes. Small groups of concerned citizens dare not enter the political campaign fray without lawyers to guide them through the legal maze created by existing campaign reform laws. In short, laws designed to reduce the influence of special interests scare off ordinary citizens, thereby enhancing the influence of special interests.

Campaign finance laws also enhance the power of incumbents, who have access to the media by virtue of their offices and have direct access to the public through the power of press releases and junkets paid for by the taxpayers. Unfortunately, it is only incumbents who can vote on campaign finance laws—and they are obviously in favor of whatever increases their chances of keeping their jobs.

UGLINESS IN YOSEMITE

A visit to Yosemite National Park and its natural beauties and wonders is always an uplifting experience, even after having visited the park more than 20 years in a row. In recent years, however, the beauty of Yosemite has been tainted by the ugliness of the people who run it.

The National Park Service bureaucrats have begun systematically making it harder for people to visit Yosemite. The most blatant and arrogant example was their forcing the filling station in Yosemite Valley to close down, making the nearest source of gasoline 20 miles away.

This filling station was not spoiling some pristine wilderness. It was located near a large built-up area, which includes a sprawling hotel complex, three restaurants, a bar and a sports shop. The filling station was closed down to make it harder for people to drive their cars into Yosemite Valley.

The National Park Service bureaucrats have their own vision of how people ought to visit Yosemite and cars are not part of that vision. For years, these bureaucrats have spread hysterical and apocalyptic stories about how cars have created practically bumper-to-bumper traffic clogging the roads in the park. At no time during the dozens of visits I have made to Yosemite, during all seasons of the year, have I ever seen any-

thing approaching the picture painted by the park's bureaucracy and spread throughout the media.

A big flood that covered Yosemite Valley to a depth of several feet in 1997 made major repairs and rebuilding necessary afterward. This rebuilding process provided an occasion and an excuse for permanently reorganizing the park, closing down camp sites and otherwise making it more difficult for people to visit Yosemite. Then, in the last months of the Clinton administration, something called The Yosemite Valley Plan was rushed through, embodying a Sierra Club type of vision of the park, sharply restricting the visits of the great unwashed in their cars, so that Sierra Club types can enjoy Yosemite in splendid isolation.

Now the taxpayers' money is being used to propagandize all visitors to the park into accepting the Yosemite Valley Plan of the park bureaucrats. Material handed out by the guards at the entrances practically gushes over how wonderful the plan is and how much more enjoyable visits will become—for those who can visit at all, under the new restrictions.

Instead of being able to drive when and where you want, under the new plan visitors will be forced to park their cars and get on buses. You can imagine families with small children, along with elderly people, all herded together and taking the regimented tour, instead of being able to stop and go when and where their own interests and need for food or toilet facilities would lead them.

It is a bureaucrats' collectivist Utopia—and anyone else's nightmare. Yet one of the bureaucrats who helped create this scheme speaks of himself as “fulfilling a sacred public trust.” In fact, what he has done is the very definition of betraying a public trust—using the powers given to him to serve his own agenda, rather than what the public wants.

Like so many of the environmental storm troopers, this

official takes it upon himself to be the adjudicator between humans and animals, if not the ombudsman for the animals in Yosemite. The Yosemite Valley Plan “will benefit Yosemite’s wildlife for many years to come” he says, by such things as “restoring areas in Yosemite Valley that have a high value to wildlife.”

First of all, the entire Yosemite Valley is just a small fraction of Yosemite National Park. So even if it were all wall-to-wall pavement, which nobody wants, it would still barely make a dent in the amount of habitat available to animals. In this context, the park official’s pious talk about reducing “habitat fragmentation” means little more than preventing those animals living in the valley from having to cross a path or a road now and then—something they do with no great sign of angst.

As a final insult to our intelligence, we are told that “generations of visitors to come” will benefit from policies that restrict visitors from coming. What the future-generations argument boils down to is this: Future generations of people with the same mindset as the environmental storm troopers will be able to impose their dictates on future generations of other people.

Arrogant ego indulgence is never pretty. But masking it as altruism makes it particularly ugly.

STATE STEALING

A reader in Michigan says that he has been living in retirement on \$15,000 a year—about \$5,000 from Social Security and about \$10,000 from stocks he owns in Southern California Edison. But now that the California government has forced Southern California Edison to sell electricity for less than it paid to buy it, there are no more profits from which to pay dividends, and the value of the company's stock has plummeted.

The Michigan retiree is by no means alone. All across the country there are people who have invested their savings in public utilities that supply electricity to Californians. What California politicians have done is steal these investors' money to pay for electricity that Californians want to use but are unwilling to pay for in full. Politically, it is a clever strategy to steal from people who can't vote in California, in order to gain the favor of people who can.

Long before there was any such thing as electric utility companies, governments used their power to confiscate the wealth of some and distribute it to others whose support was more important to them. The men who wrote the Constitution of the United States were well aware of that, which is why they included property rights in the Bill of Rights. For most of the history of this country, courts would not have allowed

either state or federal governments to force someone to sell anything for less than it cost, because that amounts to confiscation of property without compensation.

In more recent times, unfortunately, clever people have gotten judges to evade the clear words of the Constitution by putting property rights on a lower plane than other concerns that are more politically fashionable. Law professors and others have managed to depict property rights as a special privilege of the affluent and the wealthy, something to be sacrificed on the altar of the greater good of others.

Neither these law professors nor the courts regard freedom of the press as just a special privilege of journalists. They understand that freedom of the press is an essential part of the larger political process. But they have yet to see that property rights are an essential part of the larger economic process. Without property rights, politicians have control of the whole economy within their reach, to the economic detriment of all, quite aside from the injustices they can commit against individuals.

What has allowed California politicians to get away with thefts of billions of dollars' worth of other people's property has been their ability to demonize those they are robbing and depict themselves as rescuers of Californians who are victims of "price gouging." The public's and the media's utter ignorance of economics has made this possible.

The medieval notion of a "fair and just price" seems to underlie the current notion that prices which rise above levels that people are used to are unreasonable and unconscionable. But rising costs of the fuel needed to generate electricity have to be paid for by somebody. Rising demands for electricity by people in other parts of the country compete with demands for that same electricity by Californians—and this reality un-

derlies the rising prices that are condemned as “charging what the traffic will bear.”

While utility companies that supply electricity to the public are heading into bankruptcy, the companies that supply electricity to the utilities have rising profit rates. There is nothing mysterious about this. Shortages usually cause rising prices and rising profits. These rising profits then attract the investments which end the shortage. This has been happening for centuries.

Prices are not arbitrary things. They convey a reality that is not going to be changed by price controls, whether state or federal. Prices are like readings on a thermometer. When someone is suffering from a fever, you can always lower the reading by putting the thermometer in ice water. But that does not change the reality of the fever.

The enormous costs of the current political charade in California are ultimately going to be paid for by Californians in many ways for many years ahead. Businesses disrupted by power blackouts are looking for greener pastures—or rather, states that are not so green, in the sense of environmental extremism that prevents power plants from being built. Besides, who is going to invest in building power plants in California, when existing power plants are being threatened with confiscation? Certainly not our Michigan retiree or others like him across the country.

LOVING ENEMIES

Of all the Biblical injunctions, the one that seems hardest to keep is loving your enemies. Yet that happens with remarkable frequency in politics.

No one is a bigger enemy to women than those who promote easy sex. Many a woman has been saddled with the burden of raising a child alone, while the man responsible has gone off and forgotten all about his responsibilities. Yet feminist “leaders” have pushed easy sex and a unisex vision of the world, when in fact the consequences for women are very different—and much worse—than for men. Yet such leaders have been followed by the very women whose lives have been blighted by their philosophy.

Blacks vote overwhelmingly for liberal Democrats and yet no group has suffered more from the way liberal Democrats among politicians and judges have let violent criminals walk the streets. Moreover, no one has done more to make it illegal for the victims of these criminals to get guns to defend themselves with than liberal Democrats. No group has lost more from the dumbing down of public schools than blacks, as liberal ideas have been put into practice in the public schools.

Apparently loving your enemies isn't nearly as hard as it seems. People have been doing it throughout history.

Nobody brought more death and destruction down on

Germany than Adolf Hitler did by attacking so many countries and arousing so much of the world against his regime. By the end of World War II, many German cities were little more than vast piles of rubble, inhabited by hungry and desperate people. Yet one need only look at old newsreels of the 1930s to see the love and rapture in German crowds as they cheered their fuhrer.

At least the Germans had the excuse that they did not know in the 1930s what horrors this hate-filled demagogue would bring down on their heads in the 1940s, or what lasting disgrace would hang over Germans in general as a result of Hitler's atrocities. Even Germans whose families had lived in other countries in Europe for centuries were sent "back" to Germany by the millions, as a result of the postwar backlash against the Nazis.

On a smaller scale, we have seen charismatic cult leaders like Jim Jones in Guiana and David Koresh in Waco lead their people into lethal disasters. Jones and Koresh turned out to be the biggest enemies of their followers, though adored by them.

Dictator Juan Peron and his wife Eva were the toast of Argentina as they transformed this prosperous and vibrant country into an economic disaster area. Argentineans were as capable as anybody else of loving their enemies.

Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Lenin in Russia and Mao in China are among the many beloved leaders around the world who brought catastrophe to their respective peoples in this century. Napoleon was said to have been regarded as a demi-god by the troops he led to their deaths in the vast frozen reaches of Russia.

Maybe there is something in the human psyche that makes us yearn for idols. Euphoria over rock stars and mass adulation for Princess Diana are among the milder forms of

this idolatry. Even so, it is painful to contrast public responses to the deaths of Mother Theresa and Princess Di within a short time of one another.

Hating your friends is apparently just as easy as loving your enemies. Ibsen wrote a play titled *An Enemy of the People* about a man who revealed dangers that others wanted to sweep under the rug, and who ended up as an outcast as a result.

The smearing of honorable men has become a highly developed political art form ever since the orchestrated demonization of Judge Robert Bork during the 1987 confirmation hearings on his nomination to the Supreme Court.

Although a similar smear campaign against Judge Clarence Thomas narrowly failed to stop his elevation to the high bench, a more all-out campaign of smears has made special prosecutor Kenneth Starr a national villain for finding out the truth about people who lied. Meanwhile, Monica Lewinsky has gotten up off her knees and gone on to collect big bucks here and overseas.

Many people find it impossible to believe the polls because these polls seem to reflect so badly on the judgment of the American public. Believe them. They are part of a long tradition.

If it turns out that we have been supporting a man who jeopardized this country's military security for the sake of political campaign contributions from China, it may be catastrophic for America someday, but it will be nothing new in history.

MICROSOFT AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

When a writer from the *New York Times* was doing a story on Microsoft a few years ago, he asked their top management about the size of their lobbying office in Washington—and learned that they had no Washington office. But Microsoft's rivals in Silicon Valley have not only been lobbying, they have been contributing big bucks to the Democrats and providing Bill Clinton with an audience of cheering executives during his visits to California.

Is the Clinton Justice Department's anti-trust lawsuit against Microsoft a pay-off to those who paid political tribute and a retribution against a company that didn't? Things are seldom done that crudely or that openly in Washington. But an administration which sent dangerous technology to China, after getting illegal campaign contributions from the Chinese military, should not be assumed to be above that.

Zealots for campaign finance reform tend to see political contributions from business interests solely as bribes to get government favors. It never seems to occur to them that it could also be protection money.

Governments operating protection rackets are nothing new in history and there are gross examples around the world today. Why then is this never even considered as a possible

reason for many large campaign contributions from the corporate world?

Perhaps it is nothing more than the anti-business bias of the liberal media. But whatever the reason, the campaign reform issue is shot through with hypocrisy. People who talk about the “root causes” of crime have no interest in the root causes of big bucks campaign contributions.

Whatever special political favors are gotten by this or that particular business or industry, there is no question that business as a whole is increasingly hemmed in by government regulations, mandates and pressures. In short, business as a whole has been losing its ability to mind its own business and has become increasingly a plaything for bureaucrats and politicians.

Is this what you would expect if corporate campaign contributions were just buying favors? Or is it more consistent with paying growing amounts of protection money as there have been growing numbers of government powers to be protected against?

Incidentally, Microsoft has now belatedly entered the political arena. There are even complaints that its influence is behind Congressional reluctance to appropriate the kind of money desired by the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department.

Ironically, what arouses the ire of the *New York Times* writer is that Microsoft did not have a Washington office before. That was “arrogance” on Microsoft’s part, if you believe the voice of the liberal vision. When not bending the knee to politicians and not paying up for protection are considered to be “arrogance,” then you know that you are in the wonderland of political punditry.

Quaint as it may be deemed these days to refer to history, the tragic fact is that many nations and many eras have been

corrupted, and their economic development retarded, by precisely the kind of relationship between government and business that we have been moving toward. Put differently, American prosperity and American free enterprise are both highly unusual in the world, and we should not overlook the possibility that the two are connected.

Where those who hold political power treat businesses as prey, rather than as national assets to be safeguarded, the biggest losers are the public, whose standard of living never reaches the level of prosperity made possible by existing resources and technology.

While communism is no longer the official ideology in Russia, free enterprise has yet to be established. One painful sign of this are restrictions on the shipment of food out of particular regions controlled by political bosses, who are just as authoritarian now as they were when they were called communists.

The net result is that getting food in the cities is a problem in a country with vast expanses of some of the richest soil on the continent of Europe. The legendary fertility of the Russian black earth region caused Hitler to plan to transport trainloads of it to Germany after he conquered the country.

Whether it is rich natural resources, which abound in Russia, or high-tech know-how in which America leads the world, politicians can muck it up—to the cheers of those who think business needs throttling by government and who fear that business money will corrupt politicians.

LYING STATISTICS

“Every year since 1950, the number of American children gunned down has doubled.” Did you know that? It is just as well if you did not, because it is not true.

It takes no research to prove that it is not true. If there had been just two children in America gunned down in 1950, then doubling that number every year would have meant that, by 1980, there would have been one billion American children gunned down—more than four times the total population of the United States at that time.

Yet the claim that was quoted did not come from some supermarket tabloid. It appeared in a reputable academic journal. It is one of innumerable erroneous statistical claims generated by advocates of one cause or another. Too often, those in the media who are sympathetic to these causes repeat such claims uncritically until they become “well-known facts” by sheer repetition.

During the “homelessness” crusades of the 1980s, for example, homeless advocate Mitch Snyder made up a statistic about how many millions of homeless people there were in this country and threw it out to the media, which snapped it up and broadcast it far and wide. This fictitious number was repeated so often, and was so widely accepted, that people who actually went out and counted the homeless found that

it was they who were discredited when their totals differed radically from Mitch Snyder's arbitrary number.

Only belatedly did some major media figure—Ted Koppel on “Nightline”—actually confront Mitch Snyder and ask the source of his statistic. Snyder then admitted that it was something he made up, in order to satisfy media inquiries. Moreover, homeless advocates defended what Snyder had done and called it “lying for justice.”

People have been lying for centuries. What makes their statistical lies so dangerous today is that so many people in the media are ready to accept and broadcast statistics turned out by activist groups with an axe to grind—when those groups share the liberal-left orientation of the media.

Considering how many millions of dollars the TV networks pay their anchormen, surely they could spare a few bucks to hire some professional statisticians to examine the statistics that are constantly being turned out by activists, before broadcasting them as “facts.” But don't hold your breath waiting for the networks to become responsible.

Hysteria sells—and accuracy takes time, which could make the news stale by the time the statisticians check it out. However, some of the claims are so ridiculous that all it would take would be to do what Ted Koppel did, ask what the data are based on.

Meanwhile, whole organizations and movements are in the business of trying to alarm the public—radical feminists, environmental extremists, race hustlers, “consumer advocates” and many more. Wild statistics help them get free publicity in the media and help stampede politicians to “do something,” usually by spending the taxpayers' money to deal with a manufactured “crisis.”

False statistics are only part of the problem. Even accurate statistics can be given misleading emphasis. The U.S. Bureau

of the Census seems dedicated to producing statistics that emphasize differences between groups—black and white, men and women, etc.—and far less interested in statistics which indicate how much all Americans have progressed over time.

For example, in the Census' *Current Population Report* number 60-209, with voluminous statistics on all sorts of "income inequality," there is just one sentence saying that the real per capita income of whites increased by 13 percent in a decade, while that of blacks increased by 24 percent. That, apparently, is not a "politically correct" message about American society.

Perhaps the greatest distortions of statistics involve comparisons between "the rich" and "the poor"—who are mostly the same people at different stages of their lives. Most of those who were in the bottom 20 percent in 1975 were also in the top 20 percent at some point over the next 17 years. That too is not a "politically correct" message, so you seldom hear it.

The one thing that all these distortions and falsifications of statistics have in common is their thrust in the direction of creating artificial "problems" and "crises" to be dealt with by imposing government "solutions." That is apparently what makes them so attractive to the media that these shaky numbers are uncritically accepted and proclaimed to the public.

ARE WE STILL AMERICANS?

There was a time when Americans valued their independence and their privacy—and resented anyone who threatened either. Today, however, we put up with an incredible amount of snooping and hassles from people we could stop from bothering us if we wanted to.

Unwanted phone calls from people we don't know have now become part of the American way of life. It doesn't matter whether we are eating dinner, sleeping, sick or making love, the phone rings and interrupts us for the benefit of some stranger who wants to sell us something, solicit our money or our votes or just conduct a survey.

The simplest way to stop this would be for people to start refusing to listen to any stranger who phones them. If enough people just hang up, it will no longer pay the telemarketers to keep pestering us.

In some states, there are already laws to prevent unsolicited calls to people who have registered themselves as not wanting such calls. Why not a national law covering everybody?

It should also be against the law to sell anyone's name, address or phone number without that person's express permission. Some banks may send you some fine-print gobble-dygook that most people are not going to read—and buried in

all these tedious words is a notice that your personal information will be sold to others by the bank unless you specifically object. But why should the burden be on you? Where did the banks get the right to sell your privacy?

Then there are still the old-fashioned door-to-door solicitors, who want to sell, beg or get your signature for their pet crusade. Just refuse to talk to them and they too will find that it is no longer worth their while.

The electronic age has increased the number of ways that strangers can intrude on you. Some fax you their advertisements. Who gave them the right to use up other people's paper?

Perhaps the most insidious intruders are those who plant their messages in your computer, without your even being aware of it, and monitor what you are doing on the Internet. These planted items are called "cookies" for some reason. And while they are gathering information about you, you don't even know who they are or what they are up to.

You can get your computer set up to block cookies, but then the anonymous cookie monsters can bombard you with notices that another cookie is available—and that they will keep plastering this notice across your screen every time you go on the Internet, unless you accept it. One of these announcements on my computer said that they will keep showing it until the year 2009. I have to put up with this nuisance for years!

There is no point saying that we are helpless, which seems to be a big cop-out these days. Every one of us has a Congressman and two Senators. Let them know that you are sick and tired of these invasions of our privacy by people you don't even know.

No doubt the telemarketers make campaign contributions to politicians but the bottom line is that votes are what get the

pols elected. If they don't get our votes, money from special interests will not save their jobs.

People who have tried to build or remodel a home discover that they are under the thumbs of a veritable army of bureaucrats, ranging from local inspectors, who can tell them what kinds of windows they can and cannot have, to the federal government which prescribes what kinds of toilets and shower heads are legal and what kinds are illegal.

When I asked a carpenter about replacing the aging deck on my house with a new one, he was horrified at the thought. A new deck would require notifying the local bureaucrats. This could then mean that, after he spent days of his time and I spent thousands of dollars, some inspector could come around and say that it had to be done all over again because of his interpretation of the local building codes. Far better to keep repairing the old deck forever.

At one time, a man's home was his castle. Today it is the bureaucrats' plaything.

Why does the public put up with this? Obviously we could vote elected officials out of office if they didn't fix the laws to get all these people off our backs. But too many of us have gotten used to being pushed around and are willing to accept it if it is washed down with pious rhetoric about safety, compassion or the environment. Why are we so ready to give up our rights for spin?

PACIFISM AND WAR

Although most Americans seem to understand the gravity of the situation that terrorism has put us in—and the need for some serious military response, even if that means dangers to the lives of us all—there are still those who insist on posturing, while on the edge of a volcano. In the forefront are college students who demand a “peaceful” response to an act of war. But there are others who are old enough to know better, who are still repeating the pacifist platitudes of the 1930s that contributed so much to bringing on World War II.

A former ambassador from the weak-kneed Carter administration says that we should look at the “root causes” behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. We should understand the “alienation” and “sense of grievance” against us by various people in the Middle East.

It is astonishing to see the 1960s phrase “root causes” resurrected at this late date and in this context. It was precisely this kind of thinking, which sought the “root causes of crime” during that decade, creating soft policies toward criminals, which led to skyrocketing crime rates. Moreover, these soaring crime rates came right after a period when crime rates were lower than they had been in decades.

On the international scene, trying to assuage aggressors’ feelings and look at the world from their point of view has had

an even more catastrophic track record. A typical sample of this kind of thinking can be found in a speech to the British Parliament by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1938: “It has always seemed to me that in dealing with foreign countries we do not give ourselves a chance of success unless we try to understand their mentality, which is not always the same as our own, and it really is astonishing to contemplate how the identically same facts are regarded from two different angles.”

Like our former ambassador from the Carter era, Chamberlain sought to “remove the causes of strife or war.” He wanted “a general settlement of the grievances of the world without war.” In other words, the British prime minister approached Hitler with the attitude of someone negotiating a labor contract, where each side gives a little and everything gets worked out in the end. What Chamberlain did not understand was that all his concessions simply led to new demands from Hitler—and contempt for him by Hitler.

What Winston Churchill understood at the time, and Chamberlain did not, was that Hitler was driven by what Churchill called “currents of hatred so intense as to sear the souls of those who swim upon them.” That was also what drove the men who drove the planes into the World Trade Center.

Pacifists of the 20th century had a lot of blood on their hands for weakening the Western democracies in the face of rising belligerence and military might in aggressor nations like Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. In Britain during the 1930s, Labor Party members of Parliament voted repeatedly against military spending, while Hitler built up the most powerful military machine in Europe. Students at leading British universities signed pledges to refuse to fight in the event of war.

All of this encouraged the Nazis and the Japanese toward war against countries that they knew had greater military potential than their own. Military potential only counts when there is the will to develop it and use it, and the fortitude to continue with a bloody war when it comes. This is what they did not believe the West had. And it was Western pacifists who led them to that belief.

Then as now, pacifism was a “statement” about one’s ideals that paid little attention to actual consequences. At a Labor Party rally where Britain was being urged to disarm “as an example to others,” economist Roy Harrod asked one of the pacifists: “You think our example will cause Hitler and Mussolini to disarm?”

The reply was: “Oh, Roy, have you lost all your idealism?” In other words, the issue was about making a “statement”—that is, posturing on the edge of a volcano, with World War II threatening to erupt at any time. When disarmament advocate George Bernard Shaw was asked what Britons should do if the Nazis crossed the channel into Britain, the playwright replied, “Welcome them as tourists.”

What a shame our schools and colleges neglect history, which could save us from continuing to repeat the idiocies of the past, which are even more dangerous now in a nuclear age.

INTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Over the years, the phrase “unintended consequences” has come up with increasing frequency, as more and more wonderful-sounding ideas have led to disastrous results. By now, you might think that people with wonderful-sounding ideas would start to question what the consequences would turn out to be—and would devote as much time to discovering those consequences as to getting their ideas accepted and turned into laws and policies. But that seldom, if ever, happens.

Why doesn't it? Because a lot depends on what it is you are trying to accomplish. If your purpose is to achieve the heady feeling of being one of the moral elite, then that can be accomplished without the long and tedious work of following up on results.

The worldwide crusade to ban the pesticide DDT is a classic example. This crusade was begun by the much revered Rachel Carson, whose best-selling book *The Silent Spring* was based on the premise that DDT's adverse effects on the eggs of song birds would end up wiping out these species. After that, springtime would no longer be marked by birds singing; hence the silent spring.

Rachel Carson and the environmentalists she inspired have succeeded in getting DDT banned in country after coun-

try, for which they have received the accolades of many, not least their own accolades. But, in terms of the actual consequences of that crusade, there has not been a mass murderer executed in the past half-century who has been responsible for as many deaths of human beings as the sainted Rachel Carson. The banning of DDT has led to a huge resurgence of malaria in the Third World, with deaths rising into the millions.

This pioneer of the environmental movement has not been judged by such consequences, but by the inspiring goals and political success of the movement she spawned. Still less are the environmentalists held responsible for the blackouts plaguing California, despite the key role of environmental extremists in preventing power plants from being built.

The greens have likewise obstructed access to the fuels needed to generate electricity, run automobiles and trucks, and perform innumerable other tasks in the economy. Nationwide, the greens have been so successful in preventing oil refineries from being built that the last one constructed anywhere in the United States was built during the Ford administration. But environmentalists are seldom mentioned among the reasons for today's short supplies of oil and the resulting skyrocketing prices of gasoline.

Advocates of rent control are not judged by the housing shortages that invariably follow, but by their professed desire to promote "affordable housing" for all. Nor are those who have promoted price controls on food in various countries being judged by the hunger, malnutrition or even starvation that have followed. They are judged by their laudable goal of seeking to make food affordable by the poor—even if the poor end up with less food than before.

Some try to argue against the evidence for these and other counterproductive consequences of high-sounding policies.

But what is crucial is that those who advocated such policies usually never bothered to seek evidence on their own—and have resented the evidence presented by others. In short, what they advocated had the intended consequences for themselves—making them feel good—and there was far less interest in the unintended consequences for others.

Even before the rise of today's many social activist movements, T. S. Eliot understood such people and their priorities.

Writing in 1950, he said: "Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm—but the harm does not interest them. Or they do not see it, or they justify it because they are absorbed in the endless struggle to think well of themselves."

There is little hope of changing such people. But what the rest of us can do is stop gullibly accepting their ego trips as idealistic efforts for others. Above all, we need to stop letting them morally intimidate us into silence about the actual consequences of their crusades. The time is long overdue for us to insist that they put up or shut up, in terms of hard evidence about results, rather than the pious hopes that make them feel so good.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Terrorist organizations in the Middle East are trying to bill the current crisis as a confrontation between Islam and the West—as in the Jihads and Crusades of centuries past. But there is no need for the rest of us to go along with that.

Six years ago, Professor Daniel Pipes of Harvard pointed out that terrorists described in the media as “Islamic fundamentalists” are often more Westernized than traditional Moslems. More recently, a leading scholar on the Middle East, Professor Bernard Lewis of Princeton, has pointed out that what these terrorists are doing—including the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center—goes counter to the teachings of Islam.

This is not a religious war, on their side or on ours. The lives of American soldiers have been risked to try to save Moslems in Somalia and the Balkans, and American aid has been poured out to help Moslem countries around the world.

What we have witnessed among today’s terrorists are some of the oldest and ugliest passions of human beings in general, based on envy and resentment, rather than on any religious teachings. Some fatuous people on college campuses, and in other enclaves of the intelligentsia and the glitterati, have tried to suggest that we must have done something to cause

terrorists to attack us. What we have done is have achievements that dwarf theirs.

A thousand years ago, it was the other way around. The Islamic world at that time was far more advanced than the West. It was not only militarily stronger, but also more advanced in science, mathematics, and scholarship.

Contrary to the dogmas of the egalitarians, some portion of the human race has always been far in advance of others. In earlier centuries it was China and in later centuries it was Europe and America. The only egalitarian principle is that no one has been permanently superior.

As the human race has evolved over the millennia, some peoples have taken the lead during one era and others during other eras. Sometimes the reasons seem clear but at other times no one really knows why. The vast majority of people in all cultures are too busy with their own personal cares and concerns to give much thought to such things. Unfortunately, the rising prosperity of the world in general has supported the rise of increasing numbers of people who have the luxury of becoming preoccupied—or even obsessed—with such imponderables.

It is not poverty, but time on their hands to brood, that has produced all sorts of fanaticisms. Many of the leaders of these fanaticisms have come from wealthy families, like Osama bin Laden today and like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. The poor can seldom spare the time or resources for such things.

What have Americans done to arouse such people? We have succeeded. No, our foreign policies have not always been flawless or even always consistent—but neither have anyone else's. Still, it is not what we have done wrong that provokes their wrath. It is what we have done right, leading us to surpass them.

Nothing is easier than to blame those who lead for the problems of those who lag. “Exploitation” theories have flourished around the world, in defiance of mountains of evidence, because they say that the rich are rich because the poor are poor. It is a psychological coup, even when it is economic nonsense.

Too many Americans fall for such ideological visions. Not most, but too many. Even in the wake of the terrible catastrophe of September 11th, and with the prospect of still more such lethal attacks looming ahead, they cannot resist an opportunity to try to be morally one-up on their fellow Americans by suggesting that our misbehavior must have provoked these attacks. They simply cannot bring themselves to confront the reality of deliberate evil.

Two World Wars were launched in the 20th century by countries seeking to find “a place in the sun”—that is, for ego. Rationalistic excuses cannot hide that brutal reality.

Two centuries ago, Edmund Burke said: “There is no safety for honest men except by believing all possible evil of evil men.” If we haven’t learned that lesson now, what will it take for us to learn it?

Incidentally, has anyone considered that, if pilots had not been forbidden to carry guns, there might be thousands of Americans still alive today and the World Trade Center still standing?

PANDERING TO THE ANOINTED

In politically correct California, there are two things you must believe in, if you want to be regarded as a decent human being—“open spaces” and “affordable housing.” The fact that these two things contradict each other is of interest only to those who are old-fashioned enough to take logic and evidence seriously.

Economists may talk about how supply and demand determine prices. But, in California, there is not the slightest discussion of the very possibility that reducing the supply of land by taking it off the market drives up the price of the remaining land and the housing built on it.

Here, on the left coast, high prices are considered inexplicable or explicable only by “greed” on the part of landlords. Presumably, other landlords in other places are just nicer people.

One of the reasons housing is not affordable in many parts of California is that there are so many people devoted to keeping it from being built. An absolutely stereotypical specimen of this mind-set is a middle-aged hippie and Berkeley dropout who has devoted himself to “saving” something called “San Bruno Mountain.”

Only if you call a hill 1,300 feet high a mountain does even the word make sense. Moreover this is not some rural Walden.

It is a hill next to the baseball park where the San Francisco Giants played for years.

Like other things, this hill can be used for many different purposes. When other people use it for what they want, that is called “destroying” San Bruno. When the Berkeley hippies of the world use it for what they want to, that is called “saving” it.

Now that we know the local language, we can understand why the *San Francisco Chronicle* lavishes praises on the San Bruno activist “in his black plastic sandals” for saving “his beloved San Bruno Mountain.” Of course, if this really was his mountain—or even hill—there would be no story. What someone does with his own property is of little interest or concern to anyone else.

The reason there is a story is that this hill does not belong to the hippie activist at all. He simply arrogates to himself the right to obstruct other people from building on it, whether by chaining himself to a construction fence, organizing other activists or propagandizing school children who are brought there by their teachers to learn political correctness from a local guru, instead of spending their time on anything so mundane as reading, writing and arithmetic.

Meanwhile, a few miles to the west, there are nearly 1,500 acres of rolling land that San Francisco has acquired from the federal government after a military base was closed there. That is nearly twice the size of Central Park. Surely this could add a vast amount of housing to the city’s supply and ease the strains that have everyone wringing his hands over a lack of affordable housing.

Not on your life. No way is this vast stretch of real estate to be allowed to fall into the grubby hands of developers, who would build housing for the unwashed masses. It too has to be preserved for the benefit of the nobler sorts.

One set of these precious people favored by the political powers that be call themselves the San Francisco Film Centre. Note that it is not movies but “film” and that the American way of spelling “center” is not good enough for them.

How did they get onto this land? The *San Francisco Chronicle* explains: “A seven-member panel of business, community and government leaders, appointed by the Clinton administration, reviews proposals from prospective tenants and decides who gets to occupy the converted historic buildings.”

In other words, the old collectivist way of doing things, which has failed repeatedly on every inhabited continent and among people of every race and creed, is to be used to dispose of this land. The operation is supposed to “achieve financial self-sufficiency by 2013.”

Can you imagine an area twice the size of Central Park taking more than a decade to get out of the red, in a city dying for more housing? Not if it were put on the market and the buyers were free to construct apartment buildings.

If this were just the usual story of political favoritism and corruption, that would be one thing. But this is the deeper corruption of people whose self-indulgence and ego trips are portrayed as some kind of noble concern for higher things.

GREEN BIGOTS VERSUS HUMAN BEINGS

The red-legged frog is only the latest of many supposedly endangered species whose habitats may be kept off-limits to human beings, even if that means stopping the building of much-needed housing. We have grown so used to having the interests of millions of human beings sacrificed for some allegedly endangered species that we no longer stop and think about how outrageous that is.

Too often we even buy the notion that the shrill and self-righteous people who push this stuff are some kind of noble crusaders, thinking only of the higher things, instead of as the selfish and arrogant bigots and bullies that they are.

The essence of bigotry is claiming for yourself rights that you would deny to others. The green bigots who call themselves environmentalists do this all the time. They also lie a lot, as self-anointed idealists often do.

Some species that have been said to be endangered have turned out to be very abundant and other creatures that may in fact be endangered are not species. Frogs are a species, but every conceivable variant of a frog is not a species.

How many people have ever seen a red-legged frog? Or even want to see a red-legged frog? The green bigots may be horrified that there are people who don't have the slightest interest in red-legged frogs. But those people are just as much

American citizens as any life-long member of the Sierra Club and are entitled to equal rights under the Constitution. There is neither a legal nor a moral reason to over-ride what they want because the green bigots want something else.

Like others who seek special privileges, the green bigots claim to be speaking for others—"future generations," for example. But this is just shifting the argument to a different venue, without changing it in the slightest. Those people who don't give a darn about red-legged frogs are going to have future descendants, just as much as the environmental extremists will. What the green bigots really want is for future generations of green bigots to be able to over-ride future generations of other people who do not share their views.

Fuzzy words and apocalyptic visions are stock in trade for the green bigots, who are forever referring to "fragile" environments—but with no definition of "fragile," much less any evidence to fit a definition. I should be so "fragile" that I could survive thousands of years of earthquakes, forest fires and mountainous glaciers rolling over me.

What some consider to be idealism could more accurately be called self-exaltation. What could be more exalting than to take on the God-like role of adjudicating between animals and people? You cannot be a judge handing down edicts for others unless you are placing yourself above those others. We know how judges are appointed or elected. But who elected the green bigots to play God?

Election is the last thing they have in mind. Instead, they infiltrate coastal commissions, zoning boards and other federal, state and local bureaucracies, from which they can impose their edicts on others, without being accountable for the consequences. A large part of the blame for California's electricity crisis is due to green bigots who have conducted a

scorched earth policy against anyone trying to build power-generating plants there.

A new cult of pagan nature worship has sprung up, in which the slightest inconvenience to any toad or bug is enough to call a halt to even the most urgent human needs. A new mythology has been created, in which wildlife can only survive in their original habits. Spotted owls supposedly can live only in “old growth” forests, though there must have been a time when the old growth trees were new growth trees. Surely they have not been there since the dawn of time or even throughout the whole history of spotted owls.

When you see birds nesting in metropolitan skyscrapers, you have to acknowledge that wild creatures do have some adaptability—unless you think these are “old growth” skyscrapers. Species could not have survived the evolutionary changes of the earth if they didn’t have some adaptability. But now, everything is to be frozen where it is by the green bigots—and at unlimited costs to others.

Nature worship is fine for those who want it. I have nothing against faith-based organizations. But a theocracy imposing its will on others is something else, even when it is a theocracy of nature-worshippers.

ANOTHER OUTRAGE

Nothing is an outrage when the reigning fad is being non-judgmental. So perhaps it is not surprising that there has been no nationwide chorus of condemnation of Bill Clinton's anti-American speech at Georgetown University. According to the former president, America is "paying a price today" for slavery in the past and for the fact that "native Americans were dispossessed and killed."

Can you name a country, anywhere in the world, where there has never been slavery? Can you name a country, anywhere in the world, where land has not changed hands as a result of military conquest?

It is a painful commentary on human beings that there are no such countries. But it is hogwash to single out the United States for sins that have afflicted the entire human race.

And to say that Americans are paying a price today because of those sins is grotesque. Nobody in the World Trade Center owned any slaves or killed any Indians. This pushing of collective guilt, inherited from centuries past, is a shameless hustle that insults our intelligence.

All around the world, there are cities that have had different names at different periods of history because they were conquered again and again by different invaders. Istanbul was

Constantinople before it was conquered, Bratislava was Pressburg, New York was New Amsterdam—and so on and on.

Just for the record, slavery was abolished throughout Western civilization more than a century before it was abolished in the Islamic world—for it is not completely abolished in the Islamic world to this very moment. But double standards are at the heart of the hustle. Nobody else is going to cough up the money that the hustlers want from the United States.

Clinton wants us to pay for the education of children in other countries because it is “a lot cheaper than going to war.” This kind of talk is considered Deep Stuff by shallow people.

According to Clinton, Americans “have to get rid of our arrogant self-righteousness so that we don’t claim for ourselves things we deny to others.” If other people don’t have what we have, does that mean that we denied it to them?

Are people around the world to be encouraged to look to us as their sugar daddy, instead of looking to themselves to do the things that have lifted other countries from poverty to prosperity? The whole world was once poorer than today’s Third World and there was nobody to give them foreign aid.

We should also forgive Third World debt, according to Clinton.

What this means, in plain English, is that American taxpayers should be lied to when they are told that their money is being lent overseas, because no one should expect the loans to be repaid. It also means that no one should expect adult responsibility from Third World rulers, who live lavishly, build monuments to themselves and stash money in Swiss bank accounts.

The vast sums of money that can be borrowed legitimately from private lenders in international financial markets make it wholly unnecessary for Third World governments to “bor-

row” from the U.S. government in the first place. The difference is that private borrowing requires adult responsibility and investing the money in something that is going to actually produce some tangible benefits for people other than rulers and bureaucrats.

Not content with playing the slavery card and the conquest card, Clinton went back centuries before there was a United States to regale the Georgetown students with the atrocities of the Crusaders against the Moslems, saying “we are still paying for it.” Were there no atrocities the other way? Or among people on every inhabited continent, for centuries on end? But again, there is a double standard, of which the Blame America First ideology is just one example.

Bill Clinton closed by saying that the issue revolves around “the nature of truth.” Who would have thought that he was an expert on truth? Incidentally, as has often happened, he arrived 45 minutes late, keeping a thousand people waiting. But that was only the beginning of his irresponsibility.

THE BEST OF THE CENTURY

Who was the best leader of the 20th century? My nomination goes to Winston Churchill. If one man ever pulled a whole nation through a crisis which threatened its very existence, that man was Churchill, prime minister of Britain during the dark days of the Nazi blitz in 1940, when London was bombed night after night and a German invasion force was assembled on the other side of the English Channel. Most people did not expect Britain to survive.

It is hard to convey to a new generation today how close Britain came to annihilation and how close Hitler came to becoming master of the whole continent of Europe. Imagine now this monster, with all the immense resources of the continent at his disposal and in control of the huge British navy, while his Japanese allies were in control of the richest natural resources in the conquered countries of Southeast Asia.

How long would the position of the United States have been tenable, with no allies and with the most formidable military forces ever assembled arrayed against us? By now, Americans might be speaking German—except for those of us who would not be speaking at all, because we would have gone up in smoke in Hitler's extermination camps.

This was more than just another war. The Nazi ideology was, as *Time* magazine put it, "a revolution against the human

soul,” conceived by Hitler “in conscious contempt for the life, dignity and freedom of individual man.” Nothing that we could call civilization would have survived the triumph of this barbaric creed, armed with the weapons of modern science.

After an unbroken string of devastating military triumphs—over-running France in a matter of weeks and other countries in a matter of days—the Nazis were finally stopped only by the British refusal to surrender in the face of overwhelming odds.

That was what Churchill will be remembered for. Unlike the French, who declared Paris an open city, rather than see its historic treasures bombed, Churchill said, “It is better that London should lie in ruins and ashes than that we should surrender.”

The inspiration of this great man not only saved Britain, the disruption of the Nazi timetable for conquest bought time for a woefully unprepared United States to finally begin building up its military defenses. It is enough of a claim to historic greatness for a man to have saved his own country. Churchill may have saved civilization.

After the Nazis and their Japanese allies were finally vanquished, there remained the long and unprecedentedly dangerous Cold War with the Communists internationally. Moreover, within Western democracies themselves, the welfare state and socialism—beautiful in theory and poisonous in practice—were stifling growth and producing double-digit inflation and double-digit unemployment at the same time, with accompanying social degeneration and demoralization.

Two leaders turned this around—Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Britain and President of the United States Ronald Reagan. They triumphed both domestically and internationally over forces that many thought could not be defeated even singly, much less together.

Who would have dreamed that socialist Britain would begin selling whole government-run industries back to private enterprise?

Who would have thought that the death grip of the British labor unions on the economy could be broken?

Ronald Reagan not only turned around the decline of the American economy, he defied the conventional wisdom by basing his foreign policy on a military buildup, designed to force the Soviet Union to change its foreign policy and end the arms race. Reagan even predicted that we were seeing the last days of this evil empire.

Few believed him and many scoffed. But he succeeded where a whole succession of other presidents had failed.

These were clearly the three greatest leaders of this century. It is painful to imagine what the world would be like today without them.