

When congressmen eventually leave the public trough on Capitol Hill, they regularly move over to K Street to become lobbyists, a richly deserved reward after years of selfless government service. Dennis Hastert of Illinois, the longest serving Republican speaker of the House of Representatives when he retired after the 2006 elections, is no exception. He is a senior adviser in the lobbying firm Dickstein Shapiro, home to former Arkansas senator Tim Hutchinson.

Justice Department records indicate that Hastert will now be "principally involved" on a \$35,000-a-month contract providing representation for the Turkish government. He will work as a subcontractor for another former House speaker, Dick Gephardt, who runs the eponymous Gephardt Group.

As Hastert, a former wrestling coach, presumably knows little about the country paying him, his true role will be networking with Congress to block any legislation that Turkey considers to be not in its interest. In that capacity, Hastert would be just one more ex-congressman on the make. But his relationship may be more complicated. FBI whistleblower Sibel Edmonds claimed that Hastert was investigated by the Bureau for accepting tens of thousands of dollars in illegal payments from Turkish lobbying groups in exchange for "political favors and information." Edmonds's claims have never been pursued, presumably because there are so many skeletons in both parties' closets. She has been served with a state-secrets gag order to make sure that what she knows is never revealed, a restriction that the new regime in Washington has not lifted.

In Hastert's case, it certainly should be a matter of public concern that a senior elected representative who may have received money from a foreign country is now officially lobbying on its behalf. How many other congressmen might have similar relationships with foreign countries and lobbying groups, providing them with golden parachutes for their retirement?

Hastert will, according to a letter from Dickstein partner Robert Mangas to the vice president of Gephardt's firm, be working "in connection with the extension and strengthening of the Turkish-American relationship." His primary focus will be on the Armenian genocide resolution that has been re-introduced in Congress and already has nearly 100 co-sponsors.

There have been few congressional resolutions as idiotic or harmful to the national interest, but the House seems intent on pressing forward, egged on by a powerful Armenian diaspora concentrated in southern California. Last time around, the resolution passed through the House Foreign Affairs Committee, but Speaker Nancy Pelosi intervened to prevent a vote of the entire House, effectively killing the bill. This time that tactic might not work. President Barack Obama has already described the killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915 as genocide, though he avoided that word on his recent trip to Turkey.

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borhoods" candidate would have made of the community organizer become chief executive. Would he have seen him as just another conventional liberal politician consolidating power in Washington, or might he have seen him as representative of the fruit sprung from the seeds he and Breslin planted in '69? Another question comes to mind: in today's culture of viral messaging and alternative media, would Mailer-Breslin have been able to build the thunderous affirmation my father spoke of and ride that wave to statehood? If the Internet had existed in '69, is it possible, perhaps even likely, that they could have won?

My father and Jimmy used their celebrity as writers to get free press, the only hope for an underfinanced campaign working not only outside of, but in direct opposition to, the political machine. Obama wrote two bestselling books, propelling his rapid rise to the limelight. It's unlikely he would be president today without his talent as a writer.

Like my father, he understood the necessity of energizing ordinary people against the regnant establishment. A category-confuser by virtue of his physical appearance, Obama managed to convince a majority that Bush had done such a horrific job of running the country that old white men were no longer qualified to govern. Mailer-Breslin also sought to build a coalition of the dispossessed, yet had no means of showing skeptics the support they were getting on the street and channel that groundswell into mass appeal.

But four decades later and far beyond New York City, the Jeffersonian spirit that animated these two anti-politicians is more relevant than ever. The federal grip is no less strong. The communal bonds are even more frayed. The diagnosis my father delivered in his "Instru-

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The Money Pit

Obama's bailouts, like Bush's unsustainable boom, are neither free-market nor socialist but state capitalist.

By **Nicholas von Hoffman**

ACCORDING TO the latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey, only 53 percent of American adults believe capitalism is better than socialism. Some 20 percent disagree and say socialism is better. Another 27 percent are not sure which is better. These sentiments may be the harbinger of something to come—although no one can say what.

Once upon a time, America was crawling with socialists. Oklahoma was swarming with them, as were Missouri, Wisconsin and Connecticut. San Antonio, Texas had a socialist mayor. A hundred years ago, the Socialist Party was electing scores of people to public office, but you can bet your decimated 401(k) that the people answering Rasmussen's phone calls know nothing of this or anything else about socialism.

In a society in which everyone except the homeless defines himself as middle class, including Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, class warfare will be a long time arriving. The Reds are not coming, at least not soon.

The middle-class millions may be of the opinion that injecting billions into financial institutions or backstopping the market for commercial paper or doing whatever the federal government is doing with the automobile industry is socialism. No socialist worth his salt would agree. He would call what is going on a chaotic form of state capitalism or what people in attendance at think-tank seminars refer to as private-public partnership.

Also open to question: whether those answering the survey have much of an idea what capitalism is. They seem to be saying that they are hurting, that their confidence in the old order has been fractured, and that they want change—big change. Other than Obama, the only other word they know for change is socialism.

Regardless of one's preferred -ism, what they are getting from the Obama administration resembles what they were getting from the George W. Bush administration—a costly attempt to put our financial Humpty-Dumpty back together again. Though Humpty may be as rotten an egg as you will find in the Wall Street hen house, both administrations have been trying to mend him by not repeating what they deem the mistakes of the Hoover-Roosevelt era.

Key figures in the two administrations often bring up the catastrophes of the early 1930s. Christine Romer, the chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, and Ben Bernanke, the chair of the Federal Reserve, achieved distinction in their academic incarnations as students of the period. So the question suggests itself—are they fighting the last war?

The ghost of the Great Depression haunts official thinking. Did the New Deal work? Did Roosevelt get America out of the Depression, or was it the coming of World War II? The old arguments are breaking out with new energy since they are but another way of arguing about what to do now.

Contrasting Great Depression America of the 1930s with Great Downturn America of the 2000s throws a light on the daunting problems facing us.

The gristly, hard-faced, slim-bodied Americans of the early 1930s do not even look like today's Americans. Obesity was not a national health problem then; malnutrition is not one now. Then few Americans took drugs for sickness or pleasure; now most do. Most babies were born to a man and woman who were married to each other.

Then not a drop of oil was imported; now over half is. Then we were trying to figure out how to put our idle factories back to work; now we are trying to figure out where our factories went. Then most of our people worked on the farm or in a factory; now they do neither.

Then was the age of steel, smoke, and grit, of large, loud machinery, green eyeshades and brass slide rules. Sixty miles an hour was fast. Now one person can do the work it took 25 to do in the 1930s, and 300 miles an hour is slow.

Then many fewer people went to high school and college; now half the country goes, yet we worry that our labor force lacks the skills and training to compete. Then entertainment was a rare treat; today it is an indispensable companion.

Then privileged kids had a bedroom of their own; now everybody does. Then a minority had a telephone; now it's iPhones and tweet, tweet, tweet. Then a family might have one car but they could repair it; now families have three auto-