

Meanwhile the book will prove captivating, even impossible to put down, for many readers. Gelernter is a fine prose stylist who, at his best, evokes his hero White. While very few people will agree with everything he has to say, no one will miss the passion that Gelernter throws into his argument. From a purely intellectual standpoint, this book seems unlikely to move any mountains. As art, however, it's well worth reading.

Eli Lehrer is a journalist and editor-in-chief of Cornell University's SciTech magazine.

DRONE KING

By Martin Morse Wooster

The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency
By Robert Kanigel
Viking, 570 pp., \$34.95

To most Americans, Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915) is a half-remembered Victorian, someone whose name we memorized for history class and forgot as soon as the exam was over. But Taylor should be better known. His notion of "scientific management" not only made generations of workers miserable, but also provided inspiration for fascists and communists.

There hasn't been a proper biography of Taylor in over 70 years. Kanigel, a science writer who teaches at the University of Baltimore, has done a good job in telling Taylor's story. Kanigel is a diligent researcher who clearly spent a good deal of time studying not only Taylor's life but also the technology Taylor helped to change. In one footnote, for example, Kanigel writes that "my understanding of patternmaking, molding, and sand casting was aided by visits to Knight Foundry, Sutter Creek, California; Appomattox Iron Works, Petersburg, Virginia; General Pattern and Tooling, Baltimore; Deutsches Museum, Munich."

In many ways, Taylor's story is similar to Theodore Roosevelt's. Like Roosevelt, Taylor came from a wealthy family and rebelled against his parents by joining the working classes. For Roosevelt, the "strenuous life" was to be found among cow-

boys or soldiers; for Taylor, freedom was found by dropping out of Phillips Exeter and beginning work at Midvale Steel.

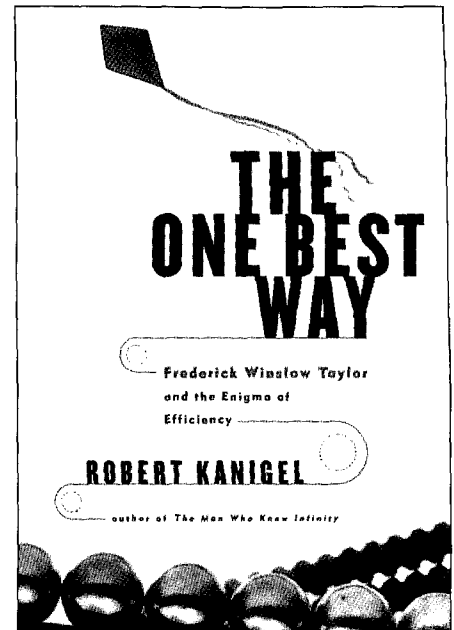
Taylor took to his new life with gusto. At one point in the early 1880s, he was simultaneously working on the Midvale Steel lathes, spending nights studying for his college courses at Stevens Institute of Technology, and preparing for the U.S. Open tennis championship (which he won in 1881).

Taylor was an excellent engineer. He perfected a new form of steel that could be cut four times as fast as previous types. In his spare time, Taylor invented tennis rackets and a two-handed golf putter. But his most important invention involved how factories were organized. When Taylor began his career at Midvale Steel, workers were paid by the piece. If a worker chose to increase his production, management responded by cutting the price it paid for each piece produced. Workers responded by slowing down until management restored the old rates. This ensured that factories never became more productive.

Taylor proposed an alternative. Suppose that management, with the aid of experts like Taylor, determined the most efficient way to work, and offered the workers more money if they would do *exactly* what the bosses told them. Then everyone would benefit. Labor would make more money, Taylor argued, and factories would produce more, ensuring higher profits.

As Kanigel notes, Taylor's philosophy of "scientific management" was severely flawed. The bargain Taylor offered was one many workers would not accept; they preferred lower wages in return for greater control over how they spent their days at the plant. Moreover, while workers under Taylor's plan abandoned their autonomy, managers had much more freedom. Taylor himself spent most of his career as an independent management consultant who was free to work for his clients as much or as little as he pleased.

But Taylor's idea proved widely popular, particularly to Progressives who thought that everything could be made "scientific." Efficiency experts swarmed across America, coming up with studies that alleged that housewives and students could be more productive by following a few simple formulas. One Taylorite, for example, claimed that students would be two



percent more efficient if their bedroom windows remained open each night.

In America, Taylor's influence ensured that factories became glutted with managers who minutely scrutinized the actions of the workers. Overseas, Mussolini eagerly studied Taylor's work and created a government agency to promote Taylorism in fascist Italy's factories. Both Lenin and Trotsky read Taylor in German, and both believed that Taylor's ideas could make antiquated Soviet heavy industry more efficient. (Stakhanov, that legendary miner from Stalin's time who shoveled twice as much coal as anyone else, is a worker Taylor would have respected.)

In the 1990s, Taylorism has been largely repudiated. Most management experts would agree that the best way to increase productivity is to give workers as much autonomy as possible. Today's management consultants see a good boss as someone who more resembles a coach or an orchestra conductor than a Tayloresque dictator.

We still need to know about Frederick Winslow Taylor's ideas, if only to repudiate them. In *The One Best Way*, Robert Kanigel does a superb job in bringing the man, his ideas, and his era to life.

Associate editor Martin Morse Wooster has been an unmanaged artisan since 1988.



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The plan was written by Norman J. Ornstein, The American Enterprise Institute; Thomas E. Mann, The Brookings Institution; Paul Taylor, Free TV for Straight Talk Coalition; Michael J. Malbin, State University of New York, Albany; and Anthony Corrado, Jr., Colby College.

D^{the}igest

SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH FROM THE NATION'S UNIVERSITIES, THINK TANKS, AND INVESTIGATIVE PUBLICATIONS

POLITICS

Is the Line-item Veto Constitutional?

Robert J. Spitzer, "The Constitutionality of the Line-item Veto," in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1997), *Academy of Political Science*, 475 Riverside Drive #1274, New York, New York 10115.

Bill Clinton recently became the first President to use a line-item veto to revoke one portion of a bill while allowing the remainder to become law. The Supreme Court will probably decide whether this new presidential power is constitutional. When they rule, writes Spitzer of the State University of New York (Cortland), they will address a constitutional debate at least two centuries old.

Some scholars argue that the Constitution gives the President an inherent right to veto parts of bills he dislikes, but Spitzer finds little evidence for this charge. Exhaustive research by Reagan's Office of Legal Counsel failed to find any evidence of a line-item veto before 1861, when it was granted to Confederate President Jefferson Davis (who failed to exercise it). Some presidents have actually rejected the notion that they can veto portions of bills.

Until 1974, presidents had the power of "impoundment" to block spending called for in portions of bills. But impoundment, though it may resemble a line-item veto, is a different power because it does not prevent any part of a

bill from becoming law. It simply means the executive branch will not spend money on programs Congress approves but the President does not like. Thus impoundment is a much weaker check on Congress than a line-item veto.

The presidential veto power is already formidable. Between 1789 and 1997, presidents have wielded over 2,500 vetoes, and 96 percent of them were upheld. In many cases, these presidential vetoes have resembled line-item vetoes because they forced Congress to remove from bills certain clauses the President found objectionable.

But does the line-item veto uphold the Founders' intentions? "If the Founders had wanted the President to exercise perfect control over the legislative process," Spitzer argues, "they would have vested lawmaking power in the executive rather than the legislative branch."

ECONOMICS

The Battle between Benefits and Costs

Robert W. Hahn and Robert E. Litan, *Improving Regulatory Accountability*. Brookings/AEI Press, 1150 17th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

One reason the federal government seems so intrusive: it issues regulations without taking into consideration how much they will cost consumers or corporations. The Family Leave Act of

1993, for example, was promoted as a measure that would not tax business, but the General Accounting Office calculates that family leave now costs corporations and their customers \$700 million annually. And economist Thomas Hopkins calculates that paying for health, safety, and environmental regulations costs businesses and their customers \$200 billion annually.

It's easy for regulators to issue so many costly decrees because the federal government makes no systematic effort to calculate their benefits and costs. Recently Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) introduced legislation that would require the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to estimate the annual benefits and costs of regulations issued by the federal government. Hahn of the American Enterprise Institute and Litan of the Brookings Institution support the measure, but suggest that Congress *require* all agencies to issue benefit-cost analyses with new regulations. Such a reform would help "curb regulations that impose costs with very little benefit."

"Until recently," they write, "there has been no effort to require the government to explore systematically the economic aspects of regulation," although some information is available from "regulatory impact analyses" made by executive agencies on regulations whose costs exceed \$100 million. Between 1990-95, five agencies issued major regulations whose costs exceeded their benefits over 80 percent of the time.

An agency located either in OMB or the Council of Economic Advisers could collect benefit-cost analyses and publish them in an annual report. This would be a relatively efficient way to make public the true cost of regulation. For just as businesses must tell stockholders their profits and losses, the authors contend, regulators should publicize the benefits and costs of regulations "in an intelligible, systematic way."