

but she became even more zealous than he in preventing Douglass from learning to read, forcing him to resort to all sorts of ruses to further his self-education. "Slavery," he wrote, "soon proved its ability to divest her of her excellent qualities, and her home of its early happiness." This illustrates another great theme of Douglass's: slavery's adverse impact on white slave-holders. As Douglass put it in his second autobiography, *Bondage and Freedom*, (which largely amplified and expanded on the incidents described in the *Narrative*), "The slaveholder, as well as the slave, is the victim of the slave system. A man's character greatly takes its hue and shape from the form and color of things about him. Under the whole heavens, there is no relationship more unfavorable to the development of honorable character, than that sustained by the slaveholder to the slave."

Thus, when Douglass declares in his third autobiography, *Life and Times*, that "the abolition of slavery has not merely emancipated the negro, but liberated the white," he is not simply indulging in a fine turn of phrase. From early childhood to his dying day, he saw slavery primarily as a *spiritual* evil—"the fatal poison of irresponsible power"—that wreaks havoc (though in different ways) on black and white alike.

**T**oday, we take the evil of slavery so much for granted that the full force of Douglass's argument can easily elude us. Products of secular and material civilization, we are apt to condemn slavery mainly on the grounds of its physical cruelties and material deprivations. As a believing Christian, however, Douglass was concerned above all with slavery's impact on the soul. That is why the argument that not all slaves were beaten and chained, that some had relatively decent masters and were actually better off, materially, than poor whites, made no impact on him. "A man without force," he observed, "is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot honor a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise."

It is hard to imagine Douglass going along with all those "progressives" who endorsed contemporary slavery—Communism—on the grounds that it provided food for peoples' bellies even

as it shackled their minds and spirits. For Douglass, man is first and foremost a spiritual being, and any system that sets out to undermine his spirituality deserves to be destroyed, regardless of

the material comforts it (falsely) promises. It is a point of view—call it Christian realism—that is conspicuous in modern political discourse mainly by its absence. □

## LOST PROPHETS: AN INSIDER'S HISTORY OF MODERN ECONOMISTS

Alfred A. Malabre, Jr.

Harvard Business School Press / 256 pages / \$27.95

## FACING UP: HOW TO RESCUE THE ECONOMY FROM CRUSHING DEBT AND RESTORE THE AMERICAN DREAM

Peter G. Peterson

Simon & Schuster / 411 pages / \$22

reviewed by ROBERT D. NOVAK

**T**he conventional wisdom of the nineties, turning experience and common sense on its head, is that higher taxes promote economic growth while lower taxes can always be counted on to make things worse. Alfred L. Malabre, Jr., economics editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Peter G. Peterson, Wall Street financier, add to the confusion with books that accomplish an astonishing rewrite of recent American economic history.

The fundamental impulse of the Reagan administration to relax tax burdens, Malabre writes in *Lost Prophets*, was "nonsense of the worst sort. . . . Slow to develop, the painful consequences of supply-side economics as practiced in the Reagan years have been slow to recede—as the one-term presidency of George Bush attests." In *Facing Up*, Peterson refers to Reagan policy as a

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"mad drunken bash" driven by the "nonsense that we could put our fiscal house in order without raising new taxes." After "the world's greatest experiment in debt-financed economic stimulus," he contends, "we find ourselves boxed into a corner from which there are no pleasant exits."

Before you mistake these two books for leftovers from the 1992 Clinton campaign, consider: Malabre clearly regards himself as a conservative and once was a leading journalistic advocate of Milton Friedman's monetarist school. He is an apparent loser in the internal Balkan wars at the *Journal* and now has been put to pasture for the most part. Peterson served as Richard Nixon's secretary of commerce and refers to himself as a "Republican fat cat." During the Reagan and Bush years, he writes, "I felt increasingly like a Republican abandoned by his party." (In fact, a better case could be made for the opposite.)

While both are thus in a sense outsiders, in the larger picture Malabre and Peterson are squarely in the liberal main-

stream, journalistically and politically. Wholesale rejection of supply-side economics has spread, thanks to a massaging of statistics to which these two works make a regrettable contribution.

**M**alabre's performance is truly amazing. Not satisfied to trash Reaganomics, he also assails the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts, which supply-siders have celebrated, and blames them for the stagflation that followed a decade later.

But what of the record 106-month economic expansion of the 1960s? It derived from the Eisenhower administration's "legacy of fiscal restraint," Malabre argues. In fact, Eisenhower's refusal to lower tax rates led to three recessions in eight years, virtually guaranteeing a Democratic victory in 1960. In a leap of faith, Malabre suggests that Eisenhower's refusal to push for an anti-recession tax cut "probably created conditions conducive to the long expansion of the 1960s." Similarly, Malabre claims that what he calls "the long 1982-1990 expansion" was brought about not by the Reagan tax cuts "but through the simple evolution of the business cycle. Deep, long recessions, economic history shows, tend to be followed by relatively long expansions."

Both Malabre and Peterson take Lyndon Johnson to task for not immediately imposing a special tax to finance the Vietnam war. Johnson succumbed to pressure in January 1967, and proposed a 6 percent surcharge, described by Malabre as LBJ's "new conservatism." Neither notes that while the surtax enabled Johnson to balance the budget for one year, the extra tax bite—continued by Nixon after he was elected in 1968—was followed by prolonged stagflation that was not relieved until Reaganomics came about in the 1980s.

Nor does this pair find fault with the Clinton tax increases. The Clinton budget, writes Peterson, "shattered some paralyzing dogma of the Reagan-Bush years. The nonsense that we could put our fiscal house in order without raising new taxes was finally laid to rest." The only problem, Peterson says, is that Clinton did not go far enough. His own proposal is "The Peterson Budget Action Plan," which combines massive federal spending cuts with expanded taxability

of federal benefits, limited tax deductions on home mortgages, increased federal "user fees," still higher marginal tax rates, a 5-percent consumption tax, a 50-cent gasoline tax, and hikes in tobacco and alcohol taxes.

That is a monstrous new tax load to stand up against the one supply-side agenda item embraced by Peterson: indexation of capital gains rates, which, on his list of twenty-four "reforms," ranks twenty-fourth.

**T**here's more to these two economic tomes than the mere defense of higher taxes and attacks on supply-side economics. In *Lost Prophets*, Malabre also rejects Keynesianism and even his once-beloved monetarism. As such, he is left with no ideology at all, aside from an agnostic's reliance on the business cycle.

This is Malabre's sixth book and, as his successful journalistic career is nearing its end, it contains valedictory elements and sundry reminiscences (though his accounts of economic seminars attended in Bermuda and New Hampshire prove less compelling than, say, Peter Arnett's recollections from the battlefields of Vietnam).

Yet there is verbal cordite in the air when Malabre tries to settle scores with *Wall Street Journal* editor Robert Bartley, who dominates the paper's editorial policy. Terming Bartley's reporting career "undistinguished," Malabre assails outgoing editor Vermont Royster's selection of Bartley as his successor. Malabre accuses Bartley of falling under the sinister influence of Jude Wanniski, then his lieutenant on the editorial page, in promoting the supply-side agenda and selling it to the world.

Pete Peterson is similarly bitter about growth-oriented Reaganomics. His book relies heavily on charts, many of them in living color, which provide a road map for the austere journey he and his bipartisan Concord Coalition partners, former senators Paul Tsongas and Warren Rudman, have prescribed for America. (The two wrote the foreword to this volume.)

There are also autobiographical elements. Peterson's first chapter ("What My Father Knew About Economics") explains what he's about. He grew up in Kearney, Nebraska, where his Greek immigrant father, George Petropoulos,

was proprietor of a 24-hour, 365-day diner. His economic thinking began to take shape when his father refused to take the Union Pacific streamliner to Colorado for the family's biennial vacation, because it would cost too much. "Instead," Peterson writes, "on the hot, dry, 110-degree plains of Nebraska, seven of us—assorted relatives included—[would] pile into the DeSoto for the 12-hour rattling crawl to Colorado."

"Only years later," Peterson writes, did he realize that his father was "looking ahead to the future" by not taking the train. Today, he warns, "most Americans—emphatically including the middle class—will have to give something up, at least temporarily, to get back our American Dream." That is, this self-described "fat cat" is anxious to impose his father's philosophy on the rest of us.

**T**he antidote to this misguided self-flagellation can be found in Wanniski's supply-side primer, *The Way the World Works* (available from Polyconomics, Inc. in Morristown, New Jersey). First published in 1978 and updated last in 1989, it remains a tour de force, traversing the globe and the centuries to portray how the heavy hand of taxation impedes economic growth. Further validation of Wanniski's theories is presented by Bartley's *The Seven Fat Years*, an effective 1992 explanation of exactly how supply-side economics brought about prosperity under Ronald Reagan.

But is anyone still preaching from these texts? Those who made the supply-side revolution—Bartley, Wanniski, Jack Kemp, Arthur Laffer, Paul Craig Roberts, Jeff Bell—are a band of brothers no more. They rarely see each other, and some of them are not even on speaking terms. No politician has taken up the role Kemp played in the late seventies of standing up to the rhetoric of "sacrifice"—not even Kemp.

The dogmas of Al Malabre and Pete Peterson—that lower taxes mean stagnation and higher taxes mean growth—are more and more accepted without serious challenge. Through the centuries, this notion of austerity imposed by the governing elites for the benefit of the governed has always caused misery for everyone but the governing elites themselves. It is a lesson we seem doomed to relearn painfully. □

STILL MISSING:  
AMELIA EARHART AND THE SEARCH  
FOR MODERN FEMINISM

Susan Ware

W.W. Norton / 304 pages / \$22

LOST STAR:  
THE SEARCH FOR AMELIA EARHART

Randall Brink

W.W. Norton / 206 pages / \$25

reviewed by FLORENCE KING

As the ultimate defiance of nature, flying is so rich with feminist symbolism that *Fear of Flying* made a perfect title for the novel that became the bible of fledgling Women's Libbers in the early seventies.

Twenty dubious years later, the subject of flying has provided another title to another champion of the cause. Perceiving feminism as stacked up on the runways of life, New York University history professor Susan Ware examines its problems and possibilities through the prism of Jazz Age aviatrix Amelia Earhart, who vanished over the Pacific on a round-the-world flight in 1937. She concludes that women's equality is, like Earhart and the remains of her plane, "still missing."

Amelia Earhart had the intriguing distinction of being the only female oddball ever to bring conformist America to its knees in worship. Born in 1897 in Atchison, Kansas, to an upper-crust mother who married beneath her, Amelia remained above the battle as her alcoholic father drank up the family fortune. Immured in an unreadable serenity eerily reminiscent of an Ayn Rand char-

acter, she worked stoically at a series of dreary office jobs to earn money for the flying lessons that she "knew" she had to take. It was her destiny and she never questioned it, any more than an Ayn Rand character would have.

Her big chance came in 1928 when she was employed as a social worker in Boston. The publisher G.P. Putnam was promoting a transatlantic flight for a Philadelphia dowager who wanted to be



Florence King writes "The Misanthrope's Corner" column for National Review. An anthology of her work, *The Florence King Reader*, will be published later this year by St. Martin's Press.

the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. When the daring lady's family forbade her to do it, Putnam launched a search for another woman to take her place. A mad genius of public relations, he was intrigued by stories of "the social worker with a pilot's license" and struck by Amelia's physical resemblance to Charles Lindbergh, who had flown the Atlantic the previous year. The 31-year-old Amelia got the job and flew into fame.

She was merely a passenger on the flight, but women had only had the vote for eight years. Female achievement was still a novelty; America was so eager for "women's first" anything that Amelia was hailed as "Lady Lindy" and lionized by an adoring press and public. After her transatlantic solo flight in 1931 she entered the cult of post-suffrage heroines: Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim the English Channel; Babe Didrikson, the first woman to win three Olympic gold medals in track and field; tennis champion Helen Wills; and columnist Dorothy Thompson.

The essence of this brand of feminism was leading by example, and Susan Ware is put off by it. "These women played a part in the survival of a feminist impulse without their even having to swear allegiance to the cause," she sniffs. A "gender feminist," Ware credits Earhart & Co. with keeping feminism alive in the post-suffrage era, but believes that what she calls their "liberal feminism," based as it was on individual achievement, "did little to inspire women collectively and failed to challenge the prevailing gender system."

In other words, they were not willing to rip up the social fabric in the name of outcome-based equality. Ware refrains from calling them elitists—and she does break off from her sloganeering to ask us to "put ourselves in the [early feminists'] shoes"—but clearly that is what bothers her. She exudes an air of condescending regret that the cult heroines of the twenties, with their just-do-it philosophy, were hampered by "a failure of vision" because they were content to be role models:

Missing from Earhart's ideology was any awareness that there might be women who for reasons of race, class, sexual orientation, or other "differ-