

# Leave Marching to the Marxists

BY JOHN TIERNEY

A news release announced that a group of New Yorkers would be marching up Fifth Avenue on Dec. 2, to celebrate the first Capitalism Day, part of a global rally in more than one hundred cities. In the wake of Sept. 11, the organizers explained, "we need to defend the values and economic systems that have produced untold wealth for the Western world and are now under attack."

So here at the home of the World Trade Center, here at the capital of capitalism, how many defenders would be massing on Fifth Avenue?

"At least fifty," the organizers promised.

Fifty people! Clearly a historic event. Even if it wasn't the smallest "global rally" on record, it had to be the first in which the organizers gave out honest crowd estimates ahead of time.

Sure enough, all of five dozen people (and no television cameras) showed up at 42nd Street on the stipulated afternoon. In the global Walk for Capitalism, organized by an Australian group, New York ranked well below Stockholm (four hundred marchers) and Pôrto Alegre, Brazil (three hundred), although the city did manage to beat out Bath, England (six). The local leader was Sheryl Ann Jackson, a New Zealander who has worked as a nanny since immigrating to Queens twelve years ago. She smiled when asked if there were any out-of-town groups marching.

"Does two qualify as a group?" she said, referring to two men from the Greater Lehigh Valley Objectivist Club, in Pennsylvania. One had a sign saying "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of MY OWN Happiness."

As the marchers headed up the sidewalk on Fifth Avenue with a police escort, another man tried leading a cheer—"Give me a C!"—but the crowd barely had enough energy to spell "capitalism." The rest of the



march was pretty quiet.

"We don't have any chants," Miss Jackson said. "We're really not protest people." The closest the marchers came to an act of civil disobedience was to tape blue ribbons and certificates of appreciation to the walls and windows of a Chase Manhattan Bank branch, Barnes & Noble, Rockefeller Center (the statue of Atlas was reverently noted), Trump Tower, Tiffany's and F.A. O. Schwarz.

It was not what you would call an angry crowd, but several marchers seemed to be jointly indignant. They were holding signs like "Privatize the Public Library," "Profits Before People" and "Get-A-Job" (next to a picture of a man lying in the street). One of them, a bearded college student named Joshua Boydston, said they were all devout capitalists, but he turned vague when asked about his intellectual background.

"Oh, I've read John Locke, Adam Smith, Keynes, Ayn Rand," he said.

Which of her books?

"Uh, *The Fountainhead*."

What's the plot of that one?

"Gee, it's been so long." Mr. Boydston paused and confessed. He was a member of the Vassar College Student Activist Union and a veteran of protests against globalization. Six members of the Vassar group had come to New York to infiltrate the Walk for Capitalism, he said. That made them the largest group at the march.

"We're trying to represent a hyper-capitalist stance that would give the whole march

a bad name," he said, pointing to the nasty signs and to two of his allies who were photographing and videotaping the event.

After the march, the capitalists were dumbfounded to hear of the infiltrators. They hadn't even videotaped their own march. They couldn't imagine wasting a minute at someone's else march. A few wondered how the activists would feel if a corporation had sent infiltrators to an antiglobalization rally with a sign like "Keep Those Colorful Natives in Their Quaint Villages!"

In fact, though, the activists would probably be delighted at the corporate infiltration—another injustice to protest! They could devote another Sunday to a rally at the company's headquarters, complete with television cameras, angry speeches and a crowd of a lot more than fifty.

Whatever the powers of capitalists, they can't compete with moralists and politicians when it comes to public protests. Two months ago, it looked on television as if the masses in the streets of Afghanistan and Pakistan embraced the Taliban and its extreme antiglobalization policies. There weren't daily violent protests for the right to buy televisions, CD's and cosmetics.

The supporters of free trade didn't hit the streets of Kabul until later, and all they did was shop, just as thousands of people were doing on Fifth Avenue on Sunday afternoon. They were too busy doing their own walk for capitalism to notice the little group walking behind a banner. ■

Columnist John Tierney works deep underground at the Metro section of The New York Times, where this article first appeared. Reprinted with permission of The New York Times Company.

and scorched-earth provisions were ultimately not enacted into law. Other provisions were dropped, some were modified. The war against economic restructuring fizzled, and investors returned.

**John F. Prusiecki**  
Chicago, Illinois

## Rah! Rah! King Fahd!

In the November/December 2001 issue of *The American Spectator*, "Ben Stein's Diary" mentions the King Fahd Center at the University of Arkansas. As the center's director, I feel that I must correct Ben Stein's distorted and misinformed depiction of our program as a mouthpiece for the Saudi government and a forum for anti-American views.

Here are the facts: Early in Bill Clinton's presidency, Saudi Arabia gave a grant to the state of Arkansas to endow a program in Middle East studies. This program is now the King Fahd Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, part of the Fulbright College of Arts. Saudi Arabia has no control over the endowment, nor over the policies or activities of the center. The center was named for King Fahd only in appreciation of the original grant.

Our scholarship and assistantship recipients include students from both the United States and the Middle East, and include Christians, Muslims and Jews. The Model Arab League mentioned in "Ben Stein's Diary" is merely one of the outreach activities supported by the center. Whether or not a student participates in Model Arab League has no bearing on whether he or she will receive a scholarship.

The center has partnerships with universities and academic programs in Morocco, Tunisia, Russia, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and also maintains close ties with

# CORRESPONDENCE

the Aga Khan Humanities Project in Central Asia and the Elijah School for the Study of Wisdom in World Religions in Israel. Our connection with an institution in Israel should speak for itself. Saudis have no more influence at the University of Arkansas than do Tunisians, Moroccans, Russians, Israelis or the followers of the Aga Khan (who incidentally are not even considered Muslims by Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi sect).

I hope this clears up any doubts about the King Fahd Center's status as an "American" institution. In the present climate of conflict, it is both irresponsible and dangerous to spread unsubstantiated rumors and innuendo that could cause an unbalanced person to contemplate harm to the staff, faculty or facilities of the center.

I have no political axe to grind and am a long-time viewer of *Win Ben Stein's Money*. I only want to set the record straight.

**Vincent J. Cornell**  
Professor of History and Director  
King Fahd Center, U. of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

## Ben Stein replies:

*I am flattered that the good professor is a fan of my humble show. Perhaps he is confused about what I wrote. I did not say his program was anti-American in the slightest. What I did say, and say again, is that having young Americans engage in a "model Arab League" is peculiar. This is because some members of the Arab League are terrorist nations, known to have murdered Americans in large numbers, and to have engaged in bitter anti-American invective. They are still doing it by the way.*

*I applaud the study of the Middle East and of Arab civilizations generally, but to fail to make it clear that many of these nations are bitter, committed enemies of the United States is a serious defect.*

## No Losers

Please don't include me or millions of other Americans born in the 1950s in Peter Richmond's "loser generation" ("Taps At Reveille," *TAS*, Nov/Dec 2001). We do know what America stands for. While people at places like Yale were "detached," "cynical" and "anchored to sarcasm and irony," most of us were going to school or the military, working hard to better ourselves and our country.

It is Mr. Richmond's elite group from the Ivy League whose "uselessness was obvious." Just because Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg do a couple of war movies about the so-called "Greatest Generation" doesn't make it so. My generation—the overwhelming part of it, anyway—has done its share.

Welcome to America, Peter, and welcome to patriotism. It's too bad it took the World Trade Center bombing to wake you and your cohorts up.

**Robert Todd**  
Lansing, New York

Peter Richmond may not think so, but he is still asleep. I suspect he intended to write an uplifting piece describing how the attacks of September 11 brought him to belated appreciation of the duties and honor of American citizenship. What I find instead is the narcissism of a middle-aged adolescent, compelled to focus attention on himself even in the midst of national crisis. Mr. Richmond apparently lacks the awareness or honesty to acknowledge his views, guilt feelings and neuroses as his own. He seeks to paint his (our) entire generation with his weepy brush, as when he writes: "[W]e were the loser generation."

I am about the same age as Mr. Richmond. I say, "Quit crying. Grow up. You do not speak for

our generation." Most of us lacked the self-righteous assumption that we could pick and choose our wars (and in the process save our own sorry rears from having to serve by claiming "our" wars were "bad" wars.) We fought the wars our country asked us to fight. We helped liberate Granada, Panama, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan (again). We gave our best in the failed efforts of Haiti and Somalia. We helped remove the Iron Curtain and free hundreds of millions of people in an area stretching from central Europe to the borders of China and the Pacific Ocean. We helped rebuild our economy from the depths of 1970s stagflation to the heights of today.

This progress did not come easy or cheap. I know classmates who started businesses and went bankrupt. I know classmates who died in the defense of our nation. Our accomplishments are not perfect or immutable. Real life is messy and imperfect. But we, the doers, see challenges as opportunities to improve previous performance, rather than opportunities for hand-wringing, second-guessing and defeatism. We don't cry on the radio, or in magazines. Perhaps that is why Mr. Richmond has not noticed us—we are too busy doing real work to join his circle, hold hands and sing "Kumbaya."

Mr. Richmond writes that a friend sent him an e-mail that read, "I just wish that I had more/any faith that the fate of humanity is in able hands." Mr. Richmond responds: "... we have never been in better hands: our own." Perhaps he is not fully asleep after all, only dozing through the snooze alarm. If he ever fully wakes up, and finds his new-found respect for citizenship is not just a passing fad, the rest of his generation is ready to welcome him. We have a 25-year head start, but we'd be pleased to

help him catch up. It's still a great day in America, and there is still much to accomplish.

**Steven P. Goligowski**  
*Lt. Colonel, U.S. Army*

## Shape Up

A man I much admire once told me, "Show me a genius and I'll show you a fool." The latest edition of "Ben Stein's Diary" (TAS, Nov/Dec 2001) proves his point. A few suggestions for Ben:

1) Print the words "PEOPLE ARE NO DAMN GOOD" in large block letters and hang the sign on your refrigerator. It applies to selfish children like your son Tommy as well as the vast majority of humanity.

2) Get rid of the computer.

3) Get rid of the cell phone.

4) Get rid of the house in Beverly Hills.

5) Quit renting stretch limos for the little ingrate.

6) Quit buying him first-class airline tickets.

7) Don't give him money—make him earn it.

8) Ditch the nanny and get an enforcer.

9) Require that he bring home good grades.

10) You must be feared as well as loved, so don't back down.

Every generation is overrun by barbarians, its children, whom it is every generation's duty to civilize. Better late than never.

**Len Price**  
*Evergreen, Alabama*

## 101 Percent

Although I enjoy your magazine very much, statements such as "more than one hundred percent...of our economic growth since 1995 derives from technological advance" make me a little nervous ("21st Century War Economics," TAS, Nov/Dec 2001). I can't imagine anyone who has an education in statistics not wincing at such a statement.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Engineering school professors, particularly at the graduate level, don't have a lot of sympathy for such misstatements.

But I'm an engineer, not an economist. Is this just the way economists talk?

**B. Kepley**  
*Asheville, North Carolina*

*Eds: Economists do speak their own language, but they use the same math as everyone else. Your question makes an assumption: that all sectors of the economy are always growing. And that's not necessarily so. If growth in non-tech-driven sectors goes negative—into recession, an economist might say—technology (or something else) can indeed be responsible for more than 100 percent of the economy's remaining overall growth.*

## Out of Control

I'm a subscriber to The American Spectator as well as to *Forbes*, and have enjoyed reading Rich Karlgaard's columns over the years. I'm also an air traffic controller at GSP ATCT (Greenville/Spartanburg SC), and wanted to point out an error in his article "My Private Olympus" (TAS, Nov/Dec 2001). The article states that "two airplanes under instrument control have never collided in the U.S."

That's not quite true. In July 1967, a Boeing 727 collided with a Cessna 310 just south of Asheville, North Carolina. Both aircraft were in the clouds. The C310 pilot deviated from his assigned routing, but was helped along by some questionable controller handling; 82 people were killed. At the time, Asheville Approach was a non-radar facility. Believe it or not, there are still a few of those around!

But you're right on target about the impact of new technology on ATC. As I told some of my co-workers years ago, if you can get weather information, file a flight plan, navigate and avoid other aircraft all by yourself, what do you need ATC for?

Unfortunately, it looks like you'll be stuck with us for quite some time to come. Between the FAA (whose primary goal is "diversity") and NATCA (whose primary goal is fighting privatization), we might make it into the 21st century somewhere around 2030. Talk about Old Economy!

**Richard E. Phillips**  
*Mauldin, South Carolina*

## The Big Bust

The population implosion is more than just with us ("Baby

Bust," TAS, Sept/Oct 2001). It will collapse with geometric speed, bringing civilization as we know it down, too. With fewer workers to fund benefits, less-free societies will solve the problem temporarily by pulling the plug on the sick and ailing. Freer societies will follow this lead somewhat later. Demand for vehicles and housing, historically marketed to the younger generations, will start to decline. Higher and higher taxes will have to be imposed on the remaining work force, to meet the demands of an aging population. The powerful nations will attempt to suck up immigrants to fill the void; others will resist by closing their borders. The crescendo will accelerate and we will enter another Dark Age.

**Verton W. Lenfest**  
*via e-mail*

## Armed & Dangerous

Daniel Pipes' otherwise informative article on the former-H. Rap Brown ("The Curious Case of Jamil al-Amin," TAS, Nov/Dec 2001) loses some credibility with its reference to a "9 mm revolver." As far as I know, there has been only one revolver ever produced in 9 mm, and it is exceedingly rare. Surely you meant "automatic"?

**Paul deParrie**  
*Portland, Oregon*

NEW! from the author of *Effective Therapy*

**Grow Up America!**

Learning to Live the Happy, Responsible Life

Michael J. Hurd, Ph.D.

"...Powerful learning...I love reading the truth!"

### The Modern Toolkit for Rational Living

Dr. Michael J. Hurd's latest book now available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and finer bookstores.

**DrHurd.com**

To order by phone, call 800-358-3507 ext. 2

### An Adventure of the Near Future

by S.K. Pierzchala

#### Rain On A Dark Mirror



a novel by S.K. Pierzchala

In the midst of the Christian-Moslem strife and economic turmoil that have devastated the former United States, one man begins a journey where physical danger pales beside dawning spiritual awareness.

Grim, vivid and deeply human.

[amazon.com](http://amazon.com) [bn.com](http://bn.com) [iUniverse.com](http://iUniverse.com)



# Taliban Find Refuge Inside the Beltway

—WASHINGTON—

As things continue to go awry for Afghanistan's reforming Taliban, its leaders now are seeking sanctuary in their caves or with governments sympathetic to their brand of moral rigorism. If they were a bit more cosmopolitan, they might seek asylum in Montgomery County, Maryland.

There, moral rigorism reigns. As all the world now knows, the Montgomery County Council recently passed one of the most Draconian (Talibanian?) anti-smoking laws in the country. It would put a fine of \$750 on the head of any smoker whose exhausts were sniffed by a neurotic neighbor. According to this law, when tobacco smoke "crossed property lines," an offended neighbor could call in the cops.

When I say "as all the world knows," I have in mind the fervent forces of atmospheric purity and the embattled forces of personal freedom. Both created an uproar after the Montgomery County Council passed its environmental safety measure. The measure had the clean-air zealots kicking up their heels in glee (assuming they still allow kicking up one's heels). The measure had the forces of freedom laughing. Apparently even many Americans indifferent to the anti-smoking *jihad* were laughing.

"We've become the laughingstock of the world," asseverated Mr. Michael L. Subin, a County Council member who opposed the tobacco measure. Well, it is very reassuring to hear that laughing remains a vital tool of debate in the public discourse. Mark Twain would approve. Though, perhaps, it is only a matter of time before the Montgomery County Council decides that laughter that "crosses property lines" and offends neighbors should be punishable by a \$750 fine.

Laughter seems to have been at the heart of what has been termed a "public opinion backlash." County Executive Douglas M. Duncan vetoed the provision criminalizing smoking at home, noting that "upon further consideration...it has become clear that the tobacco smoke provision will be nothing more than a tool to be used in squabbles between neighbors."

Mr. Duncan and his allies on the County Council had better watch what

they say about "squabbling neighbors." Squabblers are a powerful element in his reformist constituency. They not only squabble about their neighbors' smoke. They squabble against other odors wafting from their neighbors' homes. The original bill opposed, according to the *Washington Post*, "such irritants as mold, excessive dust; pesticides, paint and carpet glue odors, or gases such as carbon monoxide."

There are all sorts of "irritants" that offend the proponents of bills such as this one." There are dog walkers and pet keepers in general. There are people who wear fragrances, particularly in the subway. There are churches that ring church bells. All these things have roused the wrath of the kind of American who goes so far as to ban smoking at home. The anti-fragrance forces are particularly vocal, but so are the anti-church bell neurotics. And so you see why it is not so much of a reach for me to suggest that Montgomery County, Maryland, might be a plausible asylum for the Taliban. Once settled there the Taliban might also find Americans who share their phobia against kite flying and the public playing of music.

Neurosis can be defined as the overreaction to stimuli. Backwards people throughout the world display it, when conditions do not meet their dull expectations. They suffer anxiety, insecurity, depression, irrational fears when, say in Kabul, a young boy flies a kite or in Montgomery County, Maryland, the fellow next door lights up a Marlboro. The neurotic in Kabul sees a dagger stabbing the heavens. The neurotic in Maryland sees dangerous gases heading toward his unprotected nostrils and into his very soul.

## Jerry Rivers Strikes Again

—WASHINGTON—

Geraldo Rivera is up to his old tricks again, namely, reporting falsehoods and bullying those who oppose him. The falsehood this time is that he is to the Afghan war what Ernie Pyle was to World War II, a blood and guts journalist wriggling under enemy fire with the GIs. The bullying this time is being perpetrated upon a *Baltimore Sun* reporter, David Folkenflik, who, according to Rivera, "is

# PUBLIC

BY R. EMMI



going to regret this story the rest of his career." The offending story exposed Rivera, once again, as a fraud.

From Rivera we have seen it all before. By modern standards, he is what may be called a self-made journalist. What do I mean by modern standards? Well, one of the 2001 winners of the Bancroft Prize for history has, it turns out, fabricated his research. The 2001 winner of a Pulitzer Prize for history fabricated his war and civil rights records. A successful college football coach recently appointed to be head coach at Notre Dame is an equally gifted bio-fabulist. In the same vein of authenticity, Rivera—originally an ACLU lawyer named Jerry Rivers—is now in Afghanistan passing himself off as a war correspondent, after a dubious career whose trajectory began with a seedy television shout show and crested with his sedulously defending the probity of the Great Pardon-er, Bill Clinton, on Rivera's own cable talk show. Through it all Rivera has been involved in an amusing series of ethical scandals.

Of all Rivera's run-ins with the truth, my favorite occurred during his nights as a cable show host defending President Bill Clinton against the slings and arrows of journalists and prosecutors. It was August of 1998. Paul McHale, then a member of Congress, had become the first Democrat to call for Clinton's resignation. He was also a war hero. Rivera reported that his decorations were fraudulent. Yes, this great war correspondent now travelling with our troops reported back in 1998 that an "always reliable source" in Clinton's [!] White House had informed him that McHale had lied about his military decorations.