

fear of originality largely irrelevant. Why fear what you cannot have? This cannot be a truth for all times, but merely for an age like ours that is old. Someone, after all, must once have discovered that slavery was wrong—an original moral thought, though it cannot be attributed. Someone, equally unattributed, must have invented drama, someone the novel. Someone invented the wheel. But what is done is done. Discovery, in its nature, is finite, and Columbus was lucky as well as bold: since 1492 there have been no more terrestrial continents left to be found.

The conclusion is not depressing. It would be selfish to regret the invention of the wheel in order to win fame and fortune by inventing it now. Perhaps it would be equally absurd to regret that there are no more artistic forms to be invented or moral truths to be found.

George Watson is a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and the author of The Literary Critics, The Certainty of Literature, and British Literature Since 1945 (St. Martin's Press).

LIBERAL ARTS

'STANFORD' MADE THE MISTAKES

Former Stanford University President Donald Kennedy, who resigned in 1992 amid the university's indirect cost scandal, is now teaching a course in ethics. The new seminar, entitled "Professional Responsibility and Academic Duty," is designed to teach future professors and administrators how to handle ethical questions, reported the *San Francisco Chronicle* late last year.

Although Kennedy's own ethics were called into question when the United States government charged that Stanford had misused millions of dollars in federal research funds, the biology professor said he doesn't "see any irony about what happened and my offering this course. Nobody's found anybody who is ethically deficient here. All of us admitted that Stanford had made some mistakes. . . . We were confronted with a changing standard. I don't think anyone here is ethically compromised."



The Untimely Death of Vice President Hobart

by Harlow A. Hyde

Little does history remember the death of Vice President Garret Augustus Hobart at the tender age of 55, barely a month before the beginning of the present century. Yet we have cause to lament that, in the words of the Psalmist, this humble personage was not granted a span of 70, or even 80, years. For it can be shown that his premature death loosed an unprecedented series of tragic and evil consequences. The legacy of Hobart's early demise was an onslaught of carnage, sorrow, and suffering, the likes of which the world had theretofore neither seen nor dared to imagine.

It is a strange and little-known fact of history that most of the calamities that have befallen humanity during the present century stem directly from Hobart's death on November 21, 1899. That this obvious cause-and-effect relationship has not been widely acknowledged is a sad but telling commentary on the competence of modern historians. To correct this oversight a new outlook on the present era is needed, one that will correct the record and explain how and why our much-boasted civilization went awry during the past 90 years.

The first and most obvious outcome of Hobart's death was the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. With his previous Vice President dead, President McKinley

needed a running mate in 1900. Theodore Roosevelt, through the contradictory actions of his political friends and enemies, was launched as the new candidate for Vice President. Ipso facto, upon the assassination of William McKinley, Roosevelt became President.

At first blush it does not seem that the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt should be considered a "disaster." On the contrary, according to the "conventional wisdom," Theodore Roosevelt was one of our greatest Presidents. In some respects this is undoubtedly so. Nevertheless, Roosevelt made one tragic and completely unforgivable error which completely negates the virtues that history credits to his account.

Unfortunately for the country and eventually the world, Roosevelt had a fatal character flaw: he loved a good fight, even from afar. Ever captive of his animal instincts, the impetuous young President was eager to embroil the United States in the war between Russia and Japan. Roosevelt offered to mediate a peace treaty, the two combatants agreed, and the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth was the result. At about the same time, Roosevelt needlessly involved the United States in a nasty quarrel between France, Britain, and Germany over the future of Morocco.

Never mind that for these efforts Roosevelt was awarded the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize, for there are two reasons why Roosevelt's so-called "positive" (read meddling) foreign policy was the first great mistake of the 20th century. First, it set a precedent that the United States would henceforth be willing to stick its nose into Europe's and Asia's disputes and civil wars. Second, we earned Germany's distrust and Japan's lasting enmity for our trouble. Japan's animosity toward the United States festered and grew for the next 35 years and culminated with the attack on Pearl Harbor. Japan came away from the Portsmouth negotiations with the firm conviction that the United States had helped Russia cheat her out of a large monetary indemnity. And, as she did in 1945, Japan vowed not to get mad, but instead to get even.

With the precedent now set (one that would haunt future generations), we can turn to Big Bill Taft's titanic-sized mistake. But first let's see how the presidency of William Howard Taft was another result of the death of Garret Augustus Hobart. In 1908, Theodore

Roosevelt handpicked Taft to be his successor. Roosevelt was so popular and powerful that he could have put virtually anyone in the White House in 1909. He was idiosyncratic enough to select Bill Taft, probably because the lethargic Taft would never have had enough ambition to seek the job on his own initiative. In reality Taft was a good President and a fine man. His reputation has suffered merely because his term was sandwiched between two supposedly great Presidents: that “damned cowboy” Teddy Roosevelt and the tiresome and self-righteous Calvinist Woodrow Wilson.

Taft made only *one* of history’s “great mistakes,” but it was more than enough. Taft’s error was that he supported the idea of the personal income tax and was the prime advocate of the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment is only one sentence (30 words), but it changed the basic nature of our Republic forever. Beginning in 1913, Congress could legally tax personal incomes. Suddenly the potential for exponentially increased riches for the government’s coffers was at hand, and history clearly demonstrates that politicians will exercise their “divine right to spend” more than they should, buying, or at least attempting to buy, their reelection in the process. Taft could have stopped the income tax, but instead he ardently supported it. The bill authorizing the constitutional amendment was passed in the early months of Taft’s presidency, and Taft proudly certified the amendment’s final ratification by the 36th state on February 25, 1913, only seven days before he left office.

Poor Taft was doomed to serve only one term as President because he wouldn’t take his marching orders from Theodore Roosevelt. TR at first tried to let Taft be Taft, but physical dimensions aside, there really wasn’t much that was presidential about the jolly walrus. Before long Teddy, who, as his uppity daughter Alice once said, “had to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral,” couldn’t leave well enough alone. Soon the former friends became bitter enemies.

The outcome of this blood feud within the Republican Party was the election of Woodrow Wilson. TR tried to wrestle the Republican nomination away from Taft in 1912, but the Republicans were not about to cashier an incumbent President. So in a fit of childish petulance TR formed the Progressive “Bull Moose”

Party and ran as a third-party candidate against both Wilson and Taft. Together Roosevelt and Taft garnered 7,610,000 votes to 6,286,000 votes for Wilson. However, since the Republicans split their vote among two candidates, Wilson was the victor. Thus, the death of Hobart led to Roosevelt in 1901, who then anointed Taft in 1909, which in turn resulted in Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration in 1913.

Woodrow Wilson made *three* mistakes, and, in addition, unknowingly altered history by appointing a Hyde Park blue blood, one Franklin D. Roosevelt, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. But in this essay we are only interested in Wilson’s really big mistakes.

First, Wilson quickly had Congress pass legislation implementing the income tax that had been handed to him on a silver platter by his Republican predecessor. With this new ability to extract billions from the populace, it was possible for Wilson to build up the American military. Wilson talked a mighty good peace with his high-flown and hypocritical rhetoric of being “neutral in thought as well as deed.” In 1916, Wilson ran for reelection on the “He kept us out of the war” platform, but he cleverly played both sides of the street by also advocating “preparedness.” Wilson was an ardent supporter of the two great war preparations bills to expand the Army and Navy, which his toadies pushed through Congress in the summer of 1916. These measures insured that by April 1917, when Wilson called Congress into special session to declare war, the United States already had a good start on building the armed forces it would need to go to war against Germany.

So warmongering was the first of Wilson’s great errors. He dragged his nation into Europe’s civil war, with the result that over 100,000 of our fine young boys never came home. It was Wilson, that imperious, idealistic, know-it-all Wilson who set the precedent that the United States would willingly, if not eagerly, send millions of its best men across the oceans to fight in the Old World’s civil wars. It was the same ninny Wilson who convinced the nation to turn its back on our traditional policy of letting Europe have the privilege of settling its own messes. Because of Wilson the United States had the pleasure of experiencing firsthand the carnage of both World War I and World War II.

One could even say that Hobart’s death also led to the deaths of countless thousands in the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. This forgotten pandemic killed about 675,000 Americans in the ten months from September 1918 through June 1919. Note that the combined battle deaths of U.S. forces in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam total only 423,000. Unlike usual attacks of influenza, this virus did not concentrate on killing the very young and very old. It was most often fatal to young men in their prime, for reasons science has never understood. Conditions in the armed services were perfect for spreading the disease: the cheek-by-jowl living of the ramshackle military camps, the trains that were used to deliver troops throughout the nation, the sardine-like conditions on troop ships at sea, the munitions plants that brought millions out of their homes into daily contact with the multitudes, even the crowded public places where men were required to report for induction. Yes, Woodrow Wilson’s war was the perfect means of insuring that in short order the plague was distributed far and wide, evenly and rapidly across the continent. In 1918, we could not properly fight both the plague and the war. So, in keeping with the hoary philosophy that individual deaths are tragedies but thousands are just statistics, the war was considered more important. Lives be damned, the military effort continued unabated, while the disease completed its lethal work under ideal government-approved conditions.

If the United States had had the good sense to let the Europeans fight their own fight in 1917, the world undoubtedly would have been spared the suffering and carnage caused by communism. By the summer of 1917, Germany had already knocked Russia out of the war, and in short order the Germans would have done away with Lenin and his lackeys. The Russian Civil War, the 1920 war between Poland and Russia, the great crimes of Stalin, the communists’ intentional starvation of millions in the Ukraine in the 1930’s, the genocide against the Kulaks, World War II, the Iron Curtain, the *gulag*, the nuclear arms race, the Cold War, the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, and all the other plagues and terrors that the world has reaped as a result of communism during the last 75 years—all perhaps could have been

avoided if only Woodrow Wilson had simply kept his nation out of the war, which Wilson promised to do with nauseating regularity while he was running for reelection.

But as if two great mistakes were not enough for one President, Wilson's blind crusade to "make the world safe for democracy" also led to a third mistake. In financing the Great War, Wilson set a precedent whereby the United States government would borrow billions of dollars but never retire the debts, thereby legitimizing the concept of a large and permanent national debt. Thus, Wilson was the first President to permanently mortgage the future of his country. The United States had had to borrow billions of dollars to fight its previous wars, and indeed the cost of the Civil War was proportionately much larger than the cost of World War I. But after all earlier wars the country had worked diligently to repay the debts. Not after World War I. When Woodrow Wilson took office the national debt was less than 1.2 billion dollars. Before Wilson left office it hit \$26.6 billion. Wilson executed and buried for all time the precious policy that, except in rare circumstances, the federal government would not spend more than it takes in.

By 1920 the country was sick, both

literally and figuratively, of Woodrow Wilson. His interventionist philosophy and strident preaching about what was supposedly good for the country and good for the world had exasperated people. The country was ready and willing, if not straining at the leash, to get shed of other peoples' troubles. About any Republican for President would do.

Warren Harding filled the bill perfectly. Without a doubt, Harding was the closest thing to a perfect cipher to ever occupy the White House. But at least Warren Harding, unlike Theodore Roosevelt or William Howard Taft or Woodrow Wilson, never made any big mistakes. Frankly, the corruption of Harding's appointees as well as Harding's philandering "on the side" can be overlooked. The country has always been able to survive a few shysters in high office lining their pockets, and the nation is not really harmed just because it has a President whose main hobby stems from an excessive fondness for the opposite sex. These time-honored vices are infinitely preferable to those of so-called "good" Presidents who needlessly embroil their country in other nations' disputes, Presidents who impose gargantuan new taxes, Presidents who send millions of American boys to die fighting other nations' wars, or Presidents who

send the nation irrevocably down the road to fiscal ruin. No, the plain truth is that all the critical mistakes of this century were made by the troika of "leaders" who followed in the wake of the untimely death of Garret Augustus Hobart.

I confess that a few years ago, while researching the history of my family, I uncovered an ugly skeleton. It seems that in 1911, over 35 years before I was born, my paternal grandfather Charles L. Hyde was convicted of mail fraud and sentenced to 15 months in the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas. Grandfather appealed but lost. But he did obtain a stay so that he could apply to President Taft for a pardon. Many months passed with no word.

Finally, Grandpa was ordered to surrender to the federal prison in Kansas by March 5, 1913. On March 3, Grandpa stood on the train platform in Pierre, South Dakota. His wife Katherine and their five children were on hand to see him sent to prison. With only minutes to spare, Grandpa's lawyer ran up with a telegram: "President Taft has pardoned you!" It seems that President Taft, who had a nose for seeing justice done, referred Grandpa's request to the U.S. Attorney General for review. However, for a long time Attorney General Wickersham didn't check into it. Finally, Wickersham tended to the matter, and the result was that President Taft signed the paper granting Grandpa's pardon on the last working day of his term.

On page 352 of the 1913 annual report of the U.S. Attorney General, Grandpa's case is summarized as follows: "It seems that whatever dissatisfaction arose among the investors was created by a circular letter sent out by a discharged employee of the petitioner. . . . The misrepresentations when investigated dwindled to such a degree that the Attorney General was satisfied petitioner had done nothing to deserve a prison sentence." Thus, due to the untimely death of Garret Augustus Hobart, the nation got Teddy Roosevelt, and only because of Roosevelt did William Howard Taft become President. And it's only because of Taft that the country has the benefit of Harlow A. Hyde. Why? Because if Taft hadn't been President my Grandpa would have gone to prison, and I know my mother would *never* have married the son of a convict!

Harlow A. Hyde writes from Lincoln, Nebraska.

Destinations Past

*Traveling through History
with John Lukacs*

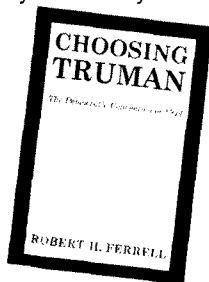
John Lukacs brings history to life in these unique travel essays that take readers on an erudite tour from World War II to the present, with particular emphasis on eastern Europe. 248 pages, 0956-4, \$26.95

Choosing Truman

The Democratic Convention of 1944

Robert H. Ferrell

Ferrell tells one of the great political stories of this century: how Harry S. Truman, a man whom Roosevelt barely knew, was handpicked by a handful of Democratic insiders to become the successor to the ailing president. 168 pages, 0948-3, \$24.95

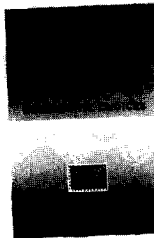


A New Mandate

*Democratic Choices for a
Prosperous Economy*

Louis A. Ferleger and Jay R. Mandle

In *A New Mandate*, Louis Ferleger and Jay Mandle put forward a fresh strategy for restoring American competitiveness, arguing that productivity growth and technological change can be reconciled with democratic and egalitarian values. 168 pages, 0940-8, \$29.95



At bookstores or order toll-free
1-800-828-1894

Missouri

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI PRESS

2910 LeMone Blvd. Columbia, MO 65201

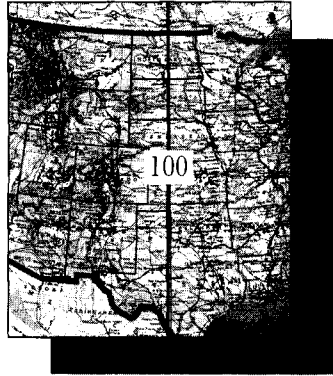
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

29,000 Leaseholders

The war on the West is not going badly—from a Westerner's point of view. As of mid-February, salient victories included the successful filibuster, by Western senators, of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's range reform bill; the routing of the obnoxious Representative Mike Synar (Democrat-OK), the congressional instigator of "reform"; the firing of the arrogant Jim Baca from his job as Director of the Federal Bureau of Land Management; and Secretary Babbitt's decision to adopt less confrontational strategies in the future, such as the creation of local grazing committees composed of ranchers, environmentalists, and recreationists. Best of all, the doughty Commander in Chief of the federal troops, panicked by the unaccustomed sound of heavy artillery, the unfamiliar smell of cordite, and the terrifying sight of blood is, like the Duke of Plaza Toro, leading his regiment from behind. In the din of battle, a modest and seemingly innocuous pronouncement by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation—that, after 92 years in the business of impounding and diverting free-flowing rivers, it has no plans to build more dams—went virtually unremarked, even in the West where the great majority of its former projects were constructed. Still, this quiet bureaucratic event may in time have a greater impact on the American West than any number of land-use reforms could ever have. As the fact sinks in, it is likely to strike millions of Westerners with intimations of disaster. Others, more farsighted, may see in it the makings of regional salvation.

Historically, the West's case for greater autonomy has been compromised by its being, unlike the Old South, substantially an economic creation of the federal government and of Eastern capital. Purchased from a foreign nation by congressional authorization and with federal funds, the region and its aborigines were subdued by federal forces while its settlers, most of them socially small potatoes and poor as Job's turkey, had to be subsidized in their enterprise by Congress and capitalized by the same powerful paleface interests they had sought to escape in the first place. The



winning of the West, it could truthfully be said, was not accomplished by Westerners alone; rather it was a national effort, like the later Civil Rights Revolution, the War on Poverty, and the Battle Against AIDS. So when the Sagebrush Rebellion broke out a decade and a half ago and the rebels appeared to be staring around for their own Fort Sumter to shell, little more was required to make them look foolish than for "conservatives" like George Will to remind them haughtily that they were effectively squatters on land belonging to All the People, poor relatives camped out in a field behind the Big House. Eastern commentators noted that water development in the arid West was entirely the work of the federal government, paid for by All the Taxpayers without whose largesse there would scarcely be any Western settlement at all. It was even meanly suggested that conservative Westerners, ever contemptuous of national welfarism, as water welfarists were actually its greatest beneficiaries. There is enough truth in both of these claims to hurt, and more than enough to give honest Westerners and their apologists pause for sober reflection.

A massive federal irrigation program was not the idea of the early settlers who arrived on the arid highlands west of the Hundredth Meridian in response to the Homestead Act, the Desert Lands Act, the Timber and Stone Act, the Swamp and Overflow Act—attempts by Congress to deny (and to encourage Western settlers to deny) the fact, plain to anyone who had ever set foot in the Dakotas or in Utah and Colorado and Wyoming territories (of course hardly any congressman had), that the almost unbelievable superabundance of land was matched by the equally incredible

absence of water. Major John Wesley Powell, the one-armed Civil War veteran who in 1869 led the Powell Geographic Expedition in four wooden dories down the Green River from the town of Green River, Wyoming, to Grand Wash Cliffs at the confluence of the Colorado and Virgin rivers, perceived at once that the land rush being stimulated by the government and encouraged by every sort of lying and unscrupulous entrepreneur would turn into a Gadarene marathon unless the problem of apportioning settlement in accordance with the available water were tackled head on and in a responsible manner. In his *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States, with a More Detailed Account of the Lands of Utah* and in his subsequent testimony before Congress concerning the report, he insisted that only a small fraction of the Western lands was irrigable; that the irrigable parts were restricted almost entirely to riparian areas; and that, even so, the cost of building dams, reservoirs, and irrigation systems would be affordable only by the federal government, which would either have to take care of the job or watch the Western migration founder. (Powell argued further that state boundaries should be surveyed around watersheds—what environmentalists today call "ecosystem management"—while settlers ought to be encouraged to hold lands in common on the plan of the Mexican *ejido*, for the purposes of minimizing the fencing of the open range and maximizing the efficient use of water.) Though he managed to procure short-term funding for an irrigation survey, Powell's ideas were anathema in an era of fortune-seekers, territorial boosters, professional and commercial optimists, land-grab artists, and self-styled rugged individualists eager to proclaim that they had no need of federal charity. This spirit of manly independence failed to withstand the droughts—predicted by Powell—of the final decades of the 19th century and was knocked down for the count by those of the 1930's: almost overnight, federal irrigation projects struck everyone as the obvious solution to the West's water problem, these to be built for—but *not* paid for by—the legions of yeomen farmers beholden to nobody. "The result," Marc Reisner says