

office that has been invested with far more power, pomp, and majesty than the Constitution grants it.

In his first days in office, Clinton will issue a series of executive orders. For starters, he will mandate that the military install gay affirmative action; that taxpayers pay for abortion counseling; and that instant abortion pills be imported from France. With these three actions, he will have killed much of the social agenda of the last decade.

Can he do this without the consent of Congress? Just ask the *Wall Street Journal*, which has spent the past 12 years showing him how. Ask the Reagan-Bush political appointees at the Department of Justice, who told anyone willing to listen that an "energetic" executive was the American way.

President Clinton might even raise our taxes by executive order, citing the supply-side lawyers who drew up the brief Bush was supposed to use to lower them.

Based on the precedents of the Reagan-Bush years, Clinton can send American troops to Bosnia to attack Serbians. He can intervene in Russia to prop up Yeltsin. He can police South Africa. And he can invade Latin American countries, kidnap their leaders, and bring them here for trial. There is no need to ask Bob Dole and the 99 other senators what they think.

Clinton can appoint Cuomo, Tribe, and Wright-Edelman to the Supreme Court, and Republicans will be told to shut up about it, as were Democrats during the Bork and Thomas hearings. The Presi-

dent is anointed to make these appointments, and the Senate has no role but to bow down before him.

Clinton will, of course, be as wrong in exercising autonomous power as Bush and Reagan before him. To understand why, conservatives should dust off their copies of Arthur Schlesinger's *The Imperial Presidency*. Not that liberals are innocents in the presidential power racket. While Schlesinger's book—written as a polemic against Nixon's abuse of power—is excellent, he looks benignly on JFK's and FDR's dictatorial reigns.

Clintonites will undoubtedly enjoy the rough justice of hammering conservatives with the tools of their own creation, but liberty and property will never be safe—no matter what party holds the presidency—until we restore constitutional balance to the government. That means a powerful legislative branch, and a President whose duty is to enforce Congressional laws, and not play dictator. The Clinton years will, of course, only make matters worse. Thanks, conservatives, we needed that. ■

A Real-World Economist

by L.H.R., Jr.

Here's to the Nobel committee, which this year gave its economics prize to Gary S. Becker, a University of Chicago economist who thinks that economics is about human choices

in the real world.

Most economists, including almost all those in government, think of economics as a virtual branch of the physical sciences, as they construct mechanistic models of the way the world "should" work. Installed at the Council of Economic Advisers, the Federal Reserve, the Congressional Budget Office, and regulatory agencies all over D.C., these economists seek to make the real world conform with their unrealistic vision, with the disastrous results we see all around us.

To most economists, the government is the potter, and the rest of us are the clay. But read the works of Gary Becker, and you get a much different view.

Becker is a "microeconomist," which is another way of saying he thinks that individual market choices matter. He studies people who think, respond to incentives, watch price signals, and seek to economize. For decades this was an all-too-rare approach.

In his book *Human Capital* (1964), Becker showed that education and training are every bit as important as other kinds of investment in the economy. But his most enduring contribution is *A Treatise on the Family* (1980).

Becker shows that the traditional family makes economic as well as moral sense. In a healthy, advanced economy—absent government intervention—mothers tend to stay home to raise the children and fathers go out to work, thanks to specialization in the division of labor. Perverse government policies have undermined the

traditional family in recent years, discouraging decisions to get married, to stay married, to have children, and to build an estate to hand on to them.

Becker's book was not the final word on the subject, but he made sure that economic analysis would not be neglected in the scholarship of family breakdown. As Alan Carlson of the pro-family Rockford Institute puts it, "Becker created an authentic home economics to replace the sentimentalism of the past. His insights have reinforced

the importance of traditional family structure to social stability, economic growth, and the health of the next generation."

As we contemplate the sort of feminist legislation that Hillary Clinton would impose on us, Becker teaches us to ask: how will increased government intervention alter incentives? By increasing its costs through new regulations, will Hillary make motherhood less attractive? Will people have a weaker incentive to create families under the Clinton administration?

The story is no different with crime. When punishments are reduced, as they have been for decades, the cost of criminal conduct goes down. That means some people will engage in crime at an even higher rate.

The prevalence of crime is therefore not entirely due to cultural decline; government's unwillingness to make the costs of crime decisively outweigh

the benefits encourages the iniquitous among us.

Becker has even argued that a kind of market exists in Washington politics. What most people think of as corrupt influence peddling, Becker sees as trade between people who want to retain political power and those who want its benefits. Together they create a marketplace for other people's money.

This means that regulations are not the result of public servants disinterestedly seeking to cure "market failures." Instead, they stem from battles among lobbyists seeking special favors from Washington. That's why one question to ask about any proposed legislation is: who's lobbying for it and why?

For the same reason, it sometimes seems impossible to repeal regulations, taxes, and trade restrictions. Those who lobbied for them get massive benefits, while the social costs are dispersed among the whole population. Few people have the time or interest to oppose legislation that costs them only marginally.

So, if we are ever to clean up the network of interest groups that dominant democratic poli-

tics, we will have to make fundamental institutional changes. No election can do the job apart from a long-run strategy.

Becker is usually thought of as a libertarian, and he does favor deregulation, privatization, and drug legalization. But he should be considered a *paleo-libertarian*, since he also advocates intermediating institutions like the traditional family, as well as immigration controls so long as the transfer state is handing out benefits at the expense of the citizenry. He also defends freedom of association as against quotas, affirmation action, and anti-discrimination laws.

Whether we look at economics or more broadly at public policy, it is clear that the Nobel Prize committee has made a salutary choice. Skoal! ■

Thanks, George by L.H.R., Jr.

Although I voted for George Bush, and doubly wish he'd won now, I can't forget that he in effect smoothed the way for Willie Blythe (his original name), his feminist wife, his eco-nut veep, and his murdering mother (with Governor Bill maneuvering to get her off) by expanding the machinery of big government.

For example, Bush gave us the Americans With Disabilities Act, which affects every firm in the country except the tiniest, ordering employers to pretend that we're all physically and mentally equal, and to spend to make it so. A small, money-losing company may have to

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