

systems, young people waste two prime years working for the government, when they could be in school or in business serving consumers. Meanwhile, their indoctrination in the glories of Washington, D.C., continues.

Old standards of merit are being replaced with affirmative action and quotas. This is true in the academy, and in what we hope is the for-profit world. American businessmen suffer from victim-group lawsuits or the expensive threat of them. The dominant assumption is that if you are a straight white male, you are The Oppressor, and deserve to be crushed.

Even after the S&L fiasco, driven by government deposit insurance, there is no effort to put banking on a sounder footing. Instead, the industry is slipping rapidly into the mire of victimology. For example, a bank can no longer conduct mortgage policy based on merit. It must first consider race.

We have nearly lost the traditional American principle that liberty is the best organizing force for society. It's no longer easy to start a business, thanks to crushing regulations, taxes, mandates, and controls. Instead of obeying customers, entrepreneurs have to salute politicians and social workers.

Draconian disabilities law, for example, produces no wealth, only privilege. As a result, everyone clamors to be "disabled," which the government defines as *any* physical or mental limitation.

The new head of OSHA promises a reign of terror

against businesses. The FDA wants to control the wording of every food label and drive out alternative health remedies. HUD wants to wreck communities now insulated from crime and welfare. And HHS is condom central, with near-pornographic ads beamed into our homes during the children's hour.

The Environmental Protection Agency is conducting a national biological survey designed to give it new powers to shut down development in the name of "endangered species," which now include—no kidding—a fly. Vincent Price, where are you now?

In the age of e-mail, faxes, Fed-Ex, and UPS, we can't even consider repealing the private-express statutes which outlaw competition in first-class mail. Meanwhile, the post office uses its monopoly to squeeze more money out of business.

Personal liberty is in freefall. In the name of crime control, private gun ownership is under attack as never before. The administration has announced its intention to drive most gun dealers out of business and to license federally every handgun owner.

A wire story the other day named John Kenneth Galbraith as the nation's most influential economist. The media have beatified John Maynard Keynes just as volume two of his biography appears. And a *New York Times* headline praised "Socialism's Noble Aims."

There's much to inspire pessimism, but at the top of the list put the FBI, the U.S. Marshalls, and the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, and Firearms. Their abuse of power resulted in 86 dead religious dissenters in Waco, Texas; Randy Weaver losing a wife and son in Idaho; and the public humiliation of Vidor, Texas, so it could be brought under the federal thumb.

Want some more bad news? There's higher taxes, the exploding debt, Washington's phony budgeting, rap music, the criminal rate, foreign aid, domestic aid, and the lying liberal media.

Clinton cries peace, peace, but there is no peace. We are, in fact, on the verge of another domestic war. Two of our most important public intellectuals—Samuel Francis and Walter Williams—suggest we reconsider secession. That is a fitting reflection of the state of the union. ■

Pull the Plug

by L.H.R., Jr.

Vice President Albert Gore conjures up what are supposed to be scary images of a split between "information haves" and "information have-nots." But if the information includes television, the have-nots will be the richer, and the wiser.

The Veep entices us, he thinks, with visions of 500 channels of interactive tv snaking into our homes. But those who think the present number is too many now have a champion: Pope John Paul II.

Speaking on January 24, the Pontiff called television a major

threat to family life, especially when used as an "electronic babysitter." Parents, he said, must not hesitate to "turn the set off," since it imports "pornography" and "brutal violence" into our homes.

The medium spreads "degrading values," said the Pope, and on the rare occasion when it isn't morally objectionable, it isolates children and parents in their "own private worlds." He didn't condemn all tv, but he urged restraint because there are "better things to do," often "consideration for other family members requires it," and "indiscriminate television viewing can be harmful."

John Paul II also urged parents to tell the television industry what they think of its products, and to demand reform. Television has "serious," if largely unrecognized, "moral responsibilities" to families, he said. The fact that it can easily sell something that appeals to our lower natures doesn't mean it should, or that we should buy it.

But until the happy day when the typical tv executive doesn't make Michael Jackson and Madonna look good, we should take direct action. I did, when more than three years ago, I created a television-free homeplace.

The catalyst was an article in Pat Buchanan's newsletter, *From the Right*. I had long been apprehensive about the tentacles of Hollywood and Manhattan reaching into my home (my daughter was then 10 years old), but when I took the article's advice and watched long segments of MTV, VH-1, and Black Entertainment Television, I pulled the plug.

Not only is the "music"—from rape-promoting rap to

Devil-worshipping head-banging—something that no child, or adult, should be absorbing—but the political content is also vile. Children are urged to adopt pagan, anti-capitalist environmentalism, and to disobey their parents if they teach chastity. The channels don't put it quite that way, of course. They just coax the kids to use condoms

no matter what mom and dad say.

In the intervening years, not only has my daughter been protected from airwave rot, but I have too. Many's the evening I watched an hour or two of tv, and then wondered why I had wasted my time, and subjected myself to the most intrusive part of the lying media. At least with the *New York Times*, I can turn the

page, or put it to its best and highest use—as Spiro T. Agnew once suggested—and line a birdcage with it.

Liberal newspapers and even National Public Radio aren't as bad for the blood pressure as television. It may, in general, induce passivity before its message, but for me, just the sight of the serioo pomposo Ted Koppel, or any other representative of Approved State Wisdom, makes me fume.

Didn't my daughter protest? Sure, but what's a father's authority for, if not to protect his child? It helped, by the way, that I didn't toss out the actual tv set, but kept it hooked up to a vcr, so that we could rent good movies (largely old ones, need I mention) on weekends.

Don't I miss anything on tv? Well, there's the World Series, but that's what sports bars are for. And I admit to being a recidivist during the Los Angeles riots, especially when the early coverage got through the establishment's filters. *That* was educational tv. And I miss seeing Pat on *Crossfire*, and so make an exception for the hotel tv when I'm on the road. But overall, the only things I really miss, or, rather, dodge, are the clods of smut and socialism (if I don't repeat myself) sent our way by what Dan Quayle correctly called the media elites. Another bonus: I didn't see the State of the Union.

Have Donna Shalala and Joycelyn Elders—who might be performers in a Fox sitcom themselves—been broadcasting pro-condom propaganda in prime time, ads that ought

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to be rated NC-17? Funny, I haven't noticed.

The Pope says parents should demand a legally enforceable code of broadcaster conduct, but I have a better idea: put a metaphorical foot through the screen, and spend your time in worthwhile pursuits, like reading, and reading to your children. ■

The Gun Boom

by L.H.R., Jr.

The "Clinton economic recovery" hasn't touched most Americans, but at least gun sales are booming. Bill Clinton's plans and rhetoric, combined with the increased threat of violent crime, is leading Americans to arm themselves before it's too late.

It's a classic case of the Law of Unintended Consequences. The administration wants to discourage gun ownership, which it tries to blame for growing violence. So the President lobbied for and passed the five-day waiting period. He's pumping federal gun licensing. He wants to drive small gun dealers out of business by upping their license fee to \$600. And he's assaulting so-called assault weapons. There has even been talk of outlawing handguns and semi-automatic rifles.

As a result, sales are up. Consider this dispatch from Dean Barber of the *Birmingham News*: "In the gun trade, of which Birmingham is a national center, there is an incredible run on guns and ammunition."

"Panic buying" is now the norm "because of the perception that you will not be able to buy the gun of your choice in the not-so-distant future."

Wholesale prices for guns have doubled in the past two months. Sales volume in many outlets has tripled. Barber reports that a friend of his got a cash advance from his employer to buy a semi-automatic rifle, six 30-round clips, and 1,200 rounds of ammunition. A criminal? No, he's just "spooked that the government would consider denying him—Mr. Solid Citizen—the right to buy the gun."

Neither Clinton nor Janet Reno nor their allies in the anti-gun movement likes the idea of Americans arming themselves to the teeth against the possibility of a gun ban. So they will step up the political attack on guns, which will only increase the level of gun buying.

More than these people are worried by increased gun ownership, however. It also bothers burglars, rapists, murderers, and other assorted animals (if the cats and dogs will excuse the expression). Criminals are much less safe in a world where the honest are armed, so the mass purchase of guns will make our

country safer.

Governments are never successful in banning what people want to buy, for markets function with or without political approval. As we know from alcohol and drug prohibition, some people will take enormous risks to provide the goods that others want. All the government can do by outlawing a product is to make sure it's sold by violent gangs instead of peaceful business owners.

The drug war has been a fiasco, and the obstacles against gun restrictions are even higher. Drugs are socially deviant and there is no right to consume them mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. But the right to keep and bear arms is guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, the closest thing this country has to a sacred public text.

As the Founders knew, the right of gun ownership is essential to American liberty. Guns are not only necessary for deterring criminals and hunting game (or the reverse). Private gun ownership is tangible evidence that we live in a free country.

The government is supposed to have the consent of the governed, and therefore not fear an armed public. Dictators can never take that risk,

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