

Miscellany11: Democracy Israeli Style; Culture Creep; America’s Approach to Wide-Screen TVs; The Cost of an Adopted Orphan; The Cost of Health Care in the US; Losing the War in Iraq; Losing the War against the Alien Invasion; US Citizenship for Sale; On Pat Robertson’s Remark Concerning the Assassination of Hugo Chavez; The “Fair Tax”; Gross Misuse of the Social Security Number; The “So-Called Right to Privacy

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Commentary on recent news, reading and events of personal interest.

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Democracy Israeli Style

Last week the Israeli government was removing Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip. This event was much covered in the US news (I was probably watching *NBC News with Brian Williams*, since I usually watch that program each evening). (Why was this event covered so intensely? I have noted my views before on how a relatively insignificant part of the world receives an inordinate amount of attention in the US news – but that’s another story.) A young Israeli girl was interviewed by the correspondent about how she felt about the pullout. She pointed out the fact that under a democratic form of government, the Jews had to maintain a comfortable majority of the population of Israel, in order to maintain control of their country. As things were going, with the Palestinian birth rate far outpacing the Jewish birthrate, the Jews would soon be outnumbered in their own country, and, under democracy, would lose control. With the pullout from Gaza and the West Bank, the Jews would retain a comfortable majority in their country for years to come. The reason for the pullout and the good sense of it were obvious to the young girl.

Similar situations have arisen in other places, such as Fiji and Algeria, where demographic changes were threatening the political hegemony of those in power. Fiji had (greedily, stupidly) allowed Indians to flood their country, to the point where the legislature was now controlled by Indians rather than native Fijians. In a final act of desperation, the Fijian military asserted the “right of primacy” of the natives, and took control of the country. In Algeria, those in control

feared the loss of the country to religious fundamentalists if an election took place, so they preemptively assumed control of the country.

What was obvious to the young Jewish girl, it seems, is not at all obvious to Americans. Up to the time of the Immigration Act of 1965, America was firmly in control of white European Protestants. Under the Immigration Act of 1965, which was intensely promoted by Catholic and Jewish interests, the country was flooded with nonwhite, nonEuropean nonProtestants. White European Protestants have now lost control of the country. In fact, this loss of control occurred long before they became a minority of the population. Under the phenomenon of “tyranny of the minority,” the majority was forced to accede to the wishes of any small minority whose numbers were sufficient to “swing” an election – blacks, Hispanics, Jews, homosexuals – whatever.

Over 2000 years ago, Plato wrote about the flaws in democracy, mainly, its proclivity to elect bad leaders who would pander to the desires of the masses. Apart from this fatal flaw, it is a form of government that works only in organizations that are relatively homogeneous with respect to anything that matters very much. In the case of a country, these are race, religion, language, and culture (ethnicity, class). In homogeneous groups, the views of the population are about the same with respect to issues of fundamental importance, and so majority rule works rather smoothly. In fractionated groups, it is impractical, and leads to division and, eventually, to dissolution (witness, e.g., Iraq’s unity under Saddaam Hussein’s dictatorship vs. its fractionation (Sunnis, Shias, Kurds) under the US-imposed democracy; Yugoslavia serves as another example).

I read recently where Pretoria, South Africa, is being renamed as Tswane. White South Africans once were in control of their country and their destiny – and their city names! About ten years ago, they extended democracy to the black population, which comprised ninety percent of the country. The current generation of white South Africans has now lost the country that their forefathers built with much sacrifice and hard work. What is amazing is that they lost their country without a fight – they simply gave it away! As a people, they were evidently too ignorant to see what is obvious to a young Jewish girl. Perhaps, like the Jews, they should have established Apartheid as a religious principle, rather than a political one. The Jews practice Apartheid in Israel, and nobody mutters a word in protest – they have bought the Jewish argument that it is religiously motivated, and therefore perfectly acceptable. The white South Africans tried to maintain Apartheid as a political scheme, and they attracted world condemnation. Since they could not defend their system on religious grounds, they eventually weakened and succumbed to international pressure. Under democracy, outnumbered nine-to-one, they have now lost control of their country. Every week, white South African farmers are slaughtered by blacks, but this fact is never mentioned in the US press. Black-controlled racism is alive and well in much of Africa, and the US doesn’t utter a peep. As I have observed before, it is a curious phenomenon that only whites can be racists.

By flooding the country with mass immigration from cultures different from the once-dominant white European Protestant culture, America has sealed its doom as a nation (because of fractionation – not because of the loss of power by the white European Protestants). As long as cheap energy was available, America was able to provide a reasonably good material life to a large population, and no one complained very much. With the arrival of Hubbert’s Peak, however, the days of cheap oil and cheap energy are about over, and America will no longer be able to provide a high level of living to everyone. It will start to decline in material lifestyle to the level of a “Third World” country. As that starts to happen, the now-culturally-fractionated country will explode in ethnic violence, and disintegrate.

It is interesting to note that what Jews proscribe for their own nation (mass immigration from any culture, interracial marriages), they enthusiastically support for their enemies (gentile nations, such as the US). When asked why alien invasion and intermarriage is bad for Jews but good for the US, they assert that their prohibition is based on religion, not on social or political considerations, so it is quite all right (from a moral viewpoint). (For more on this subject, refer to Kevin MacDonald's books, *The Culture of Critique*, *A People that Shall Dwell Alone*, and *Separation and Its Discontents*.)

It is also interesting to observe that for all three nations that I have mentioned here – the US, Israel, and South Africa – they grew and became powerful in their days of cultural intolerance. Israel is still culturally intolerant, and it is preserving itself and becoming stronger. South Africa abandoned its goal of preserving its culture, and it has been destroyed – quickly, because the previously dominant culture represented but a small fraction of the total population. The US has abandoned its goal of preserving its culture, and is now, grossly fractionated, set on a path of cultural and national suicide. This process will take somewhat longer than in the case of South Africa, since the once-dominant US culture was a large majority. As the petroleum age draws to a close and global industrial civilization collapses, those cultures that care little or nothing about preserving themselves will quickly disappear. Those, such as the Jewish, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese cultures, that place an importance on preserving their culture, will be among those vying for control of the planet as industrial society collapses.

Culture Creep

For the past three years, I have been living and working in Zambia. Earlier this year, I moved back to the US. When you are away from your country for a while, it is interesting to notice the changes that occur while you were gone. Before I left (three years ago), karaoke was very active in my home in Clearwater – you could find a karaoke bar or restaurant on almost any corner. When I returned to Clearwater after three years, karaoke was almost nonexistent (in Clearwater – it is still quite active in other parts of the US).

I recently moved from Florida to South Carolina. The last time I visited South Carolina, there was hardly a trace of Hispanic influence. Now, Mexicans are everywhere I go. There are Mexican restaurants everywhere, and Mexicans in all of the stores. Where once English was the sole language, I now see and hear Spanish wherever I go. In the county government offices, every sign was expressed in the same size letters in both Spanish and English (e.g., *Human Resources / Recursos Humanos*). The telephone answering machines and the bank automated teller machines (ATMs) now all have Spanish options. Native English-speaking people are now at a severe disadvantage in applying for many jobs.

The US is being rapidly given away to illegal aliens. There are now an estimated ten million of them in the US. The government is doing essentially nothing to repel the alien invasion, because it is very good for the economy.

One of the interesting things that I observed upon my return is the large number of crosses along the highway. These crosses are placed there by Hispanics to mark the place where a relative died in an automobile accident. A couple of decades ago, there were no such crosses; now, there are many. These crosses are an “in-your-face” statement that the country is being taken over by Mexicans. The US government is fully complicit in this action. If you were to place your own sign on the state property that is alongside the highway, it would be promptly removed. But the Mexican accident crosses remain undisturbed. If native Americans cared about keeping their culture, they would knock down these crosses. Native American culture

does not have accident markers on the highway. You cannot have it both ways – the choice is a mutually exclusive one: it is either native American culture with no accident-marker crosses, or Mexican culture with accident-marker crosses.

In most countries, it is the youths who fight to retain their culture – both in war and in peacetime society. In the US, however, no youths are knocking down the accident markers. (I wonder: Although the accident markers are illegally placed, is it also illegal to knock them down?) It appears that US youth do not care to retain their culture. For years, US schools have been teaching US children that everyone is “equal,” and no culture is any better than any other culture. Evidently they got the message. How incredible. How sad.

America’s Approach to Wide-Screen TVs

Last fall my wife and I visited friends in Spain. They had recently purchased a villa in Denia, and we visited a large appliance store to shop for a television set. I had not been in a similar store in the US for several years, and I was surprised to see that all of the TV sets for sale were “wide screen” ones. Evidently a new standard is being introduced worldwide, in which the screen is much wider than in the old format. I noticed that the picture on the screens was distorted somewhat horizontally, and I asked the salesman about this. He informed me that the old-format signal would continue to be transmitted for two more years (and look somewhat distorted on the new sets), and then the new signal would be transmitted. At that time, the picture on all new-format sets would be correct, and the picture on all old-format sets would be noticeably incorrect.

That was the last that I thought of this until I was in a local appliance store (Circuit City) in the US a couple of weeks ago. To my amazement, *all* of the sets for sale were the old-format (almost square) screens. As I was paying for my purchase, I commented to the salesman that in Europe, all of the sets for sale were of the wide-screen variety. He told me that the wide-screen format was to be introduced in the US in a couple of years. I told him that I was puzzled that all of the new TV sets for sale in Europe were wide-screen, whereas all of them for sale in the US were narrow-screen. He told me that there was a very good reason for this.

Evidently, it was originally planned to switch to wide-screen by a certain date in the US, but (for reasons the clerk did not provide) the switch date had been extended for a few more years. The US TV industry had decided that it would make much more money if it sold mainly narrow-screen TVs until the switch date, and then sold mainly wide-screen TVs after the switch date. By this scheme, all of the sets that it sold up to the switch date would instantly become obsolete (the picture on a 27-inch TV would now be about 13 inches tall!), and everyone would have to buy a new wide-screen TV to have a reasonable picture. He told me that this was being done in full cooperation of the US government, since they agreed that it would result in the sales of many more TV sets than would otherwise be the case (if the wide-screen TVs were introduced early, as is being done in Europe).

This is truly amazing. Evidently, all that matters to the US government is increasing gross national product. It does not matter that all of the TVs bought for the past five or ten years will be instantly obsolete. It does not matter that all of the energy required to produce a decade of obsolete TVs is wasted. It does not matter that all of this unnecessary industrial production will result in the production of massive additional amounts of pollution, such as greenhouse gasses, and destruction of nature. All that matters is that the US economy produce millions of additional – and unneeded – TVs. Can this be true? Is all that matters is the money? Is America indeed the “Great Satan” of which the Book of Revelation and our Arab neighbors speak?

The Cost of an Adopted Orphan

A few weeks ago, my wife and I visited a friend in Charlotte, North Carolina. Our friend is an elderly but very active lady who does volunteer work. For many years, she has done volunteer work in a Charlotte hospital, but recently she has done some volunteer work as a greeter in the Charlotte Douglas International Airport.

During our visit, she told us that one of the families that she greeted was an American couple returning from Russia, where they had adopted a Russian baby. They had the baby with them, and our friend greeted them enthusiastically with open arms. I asked her if she had presented them with a bill. She said, "A bill? For what?". I told her that for each new immigrant to the US, approximately one acre of natural land is destroyed – converted into concrete and steel for the new roads and buildings that every American uses. The bill is for the destruction of one acre of natural land – and of all of the wildlife associated with it. It is also for the additional pollution caused by the addition of another person – pollution of the land (ploughing, herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, chemical fertilizer, loss of topsoil); rivers, lakes and seas (from runoff and fertilizer poisoning); and air (smog, greenhouse gases). And it is for the destruction of wildlife and extinction of species on the land, water, and air that is polluted or destroyed.

Of course, our friend had never thought about such a thing, and totally rejected my point of view.

Undeterred, I continued by telling our friend that it would be much better for the planet if the orphan had remained in Russia, since it would consume much less energy there than here (and therefore cause less damage to the planet, such as the production of more greenhouse gases). I explained that an average US citizen uses about 2000 kilograms of oil equivalent each year, whereas an average Russian uses only a small fraction of that (perhaps a tenth, or a fifth). The worst possible thing that can be done for the planetary environment is to transfer people from poor countries (low energy-use countries) to the US (a high energy-use country).

"You can't be serious!" my friend responded, as she suggested that we turn on the television and watch "Dancing with the Stars."

The Cost of Health Care in the US

Wednesday a week ago I suffered a tear (as in "rip," not "drop") in the retina in my right eye. Following cataract surgery in 2003, I had a retina detach in my left eye in 2004 (retinal detachments are common after cataract surgery), and the surgeon told me at the time that the retina would likely detach in my right eye as well.

If you do not have a retinal tear treated, the retina eventually detaches, requiring major surgery to replace it, often with permanent vision damage. (If you don't have the retina replaced, you go blind in that eye.) If you have the tear mended (by laser or cryotherapy) right away, the operation is minor and the permanent loss of vision is avoided.

I had the tear mended by cryotherapy ("freezing") on Friday. The cost of this fifteen-minute procedure in the doctor's office was over USD5,000. In Lusaka, Zambia (my previous home) the cost of retinal mending (using lasers – the cryotherapy is not available there) is USD100. In Pretoria, South Africa (where the full range of services is available), the physician's cost for a major retina operation is just several hundred dollars.

The thing that is rather amazing is that, with respect to medical care, everything in Pretoria is comparable to that in the US, except the vastly different price. In Pretoria, I had my eye treated at the Pretoria Eye Institute. This is a world-class facility. It is just down the street from the hospital where Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the world's first human heart transplant. The physicians that treated me had advanced medical degrees from South African universities, and had had additional retinal-specialty training in the US. Eye physicians in Africa live at about the same level of living as those in the US. The cost of a nice home there is hundreds of thousands of dollars there, as it is here. The cost of a car and other household goods is generally more there than here. Why, then, is the cost of the same eye operation so many times greater in the US than elsewhere?

The cost is not just somewhat higher, but obscenely higher. You have to wonder why. The cost of medical care was not absurdly high in the US in the 1940s. Even as late as 1960, when my first son was born, the physician's fee was just \$125.00, and the daily cost of the hospital room was about \$25.00. These were reasonable fees (even adjusted for inflation to today's prices), and anyone could afford them without the need for medical insurance.

With respect to physicians' salaries, I have a little knowledge about why the situation is so bizarre. As I understand it, in the 1950s the US embarked on a program to deliberately restrict the supply of physicians, in an effort to boost physicians' salaries. This was done by restricting access of students to medical schools. This program to restrict trade in medical practices was undertaken by the American Medical Association in the full knowledge of the US government. It is unique -- in other domains, such efforts to monopolize, constrain trade, and manipulate prices are forbidden (or, as in the case of a government-granted monopoly, the prices are controlled by the government).

This program to restrict the supply of physicians was highly effective in raising their salaries. In the 1940s, a physician made on the order of \$10,000 per year – not out of line with other technical specialists, such as physicists or chemical engineers. By the end of the 1950s, US physicians were making several tens of thousands of dollars per year. Now, they make hundreds of thousands of dollars, or even millions of dollars, per year – far in excess of technical specialists with comparable training in other fields. The situation is not like this anywhere else in the world. Physicians' salaries elsewhere are not out of line with the salaries of other highly trained technical people.

The point that I am making is that it appears that physicians' fees are so high in the US simply because the government, in collusion with the private medical system, has embarked on a program to make all doctors millionaires and multimillionaires. There are, of course, other factors that have pushed the cost of medical care in the US to astronomical levels, such as medical insurance, out-of-control litigation, and extreme utilization of technology.

(Aside: I recently visited St. George's University in Grenada, where I was interviewed for the post of professor of biostatistics. St. George's University is a medical school that was established by several US physicians for the purpose of enabling qualified US medical students, who have been denied access to training in the US, to obtain their MD degrees. St. George's is but a small university, however (a few hundred faculty), and its existence does little to impact the total supply of physicians in the US.)

In the preceding, I have discussed just my recent experience in eye surgery. I can present other examples. In Lusaka, Zambia, our regular physician was a US-trained MD (an American,

in his forties). The cost of access to his clinic was USD400 per year for a family (i.e., for my wife and me). This included *all* visits, but not lab work or medications. My wife is diabetic and has a heart condition, and she saw the physician on a regular basis. I saw him once last year, to have some precancerous lesions (“skin cancers”) removed from my scalp (by “freezing” with liquid nitrogen). The cost of this – nothing! It was included in the \$400 annual fee. When I recently returned from Zambia to Clearwater, Florida, I had some additional lesions removed (this was about a year later). The cost: \$285! Upon our return to Clearwater my wife visited our family physician there, once for treatment for a nagging cold, and once to have a prescription renewed for her diabetes and heart medicine. The cost: \$250 each visit! Those two brief office visits cost more than the entire year’s fees for two people, overseas (using a US-trained American physician!). The medicines (insulin, heart medicine) that she purchased in Zambia for a couple of hundred dollars a quarter now cost her several hundred dollars per month. If the quality of the services were substantially different in the US from overseas, you would expect a higher cost. But the quality is comparable and the price difference is extreme.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, some gasoline service-stations (on September 1) have boosted the price of gasoline to over six dollars a gallon – about twice the normal price. (This is about the average cost of “petrol” overseas.) Americans are outraged at this, and are calling for arrest and imprisonment of these “price gougers” and “profiteers.” But US physicians are charging about *ten times* as much as comparably trained and equipped physicians in other developed countries, and Americans are not saying a thing. How do you explain this?

Losing the War in Iraq

The US is losing the war in Iraq, just as it lost the war in Vietnam, and for the same reason. It is not interested in *winning* the war, but in *waging* the war. The process of waging the war costs an incredibly large amount of money (about 200 billion dollars to date), thereby boosting the US gross national product tremendously. The war could be won at far less cost (and loss of life – 1800 soldiers killed and thousands maimed to date). I have discussed how to win the war in Iraq in my article “How to Win the War in Iraq,” and will not repeat the arguments here.

I said that the US would continue the war only as long as it believed that it could obtain access to Iraqi oil. Since the enemy is evidently quite able to deny access to the oil, America will soon abandon this effort.

Losing the War against the Alien Invasion

Times have really changed! When I first started writing about the alien invasion of America, very few people were concerned about it. A few people had written books about it, and that was about it. After many years of the invasion, however, things are getting so bad that lots of people are now starting to take notice. Because of mass immigration – both legal and illegal – the population of the country has exploded, from about 200 million in 1965 when the Immigration Act of 1965 was passed, to almost 300 million now. Because of this population explosion, the quality of life in the US has dropped dramatically. Much of our natural beauty has been destroyed, crowding is severe, road traffic is terrible, commute times are unbearable, urban sprawl and decay is extreme, and few young people can afford to purchase a house unless both work in the competitive labor market (i.e., outside the home).

There are now an estimated 10-20 million illegal aliens in the US. They are everywhere! I have written at length on this phenomenon, and will not repeat the discussion here. The crux of the problem is that mass immigration is good for business (100 million additional people require a

lot of new homes, schools, roads, hospitals, furniture, and the like), and the government therefore wants it, regardless of the cost to the US environment or degradation to the quality of life of the earlier residents.

The situation has become so bad that private citizen groups, such as the Minutemen, are trying to stop the flow of aliens across the borders. Just as I predicted, President Bush has labeled these citizens as vigilantes. That didn't do much to stem their fervor, however, so the government is now trying to assimilate them into the official border-control agency.

The US will not win the war against immigration, because it does not want to. The government *wants* more immigrants, legal or illegal. It will continue to essentially do nothing to stem the tide of illegal immigrants, or it will legalize their presence here. Legal immigration is already about a million people a year. Although this mass immigration is causing substantial damage to our natural environment, degrading the quality of life for most citizens, and destroying our culture, it will continue because the government is dead set on doing anything that will boost gross national product, regardless of cost to the national or planetary environment – or to our culture. The additional 100 million Americans contribute greatly to increased opportunities for the wealthy elite, who are largely isolated from the destruction. As in the German silent film, *Metropolis*, they continue to frolic in their flowered villas while the hopeless masses labor on.

The US' current policy of allowing the illegal aliens to cross the border, and then "process" them, is stupid, from the point of view of deterring immigration. If a country is serious about preventing aliens from invading, it takes military steps to stop them. On CNN's Lou Dobbs' news program a few nights ago, a US congressman stated that if it were serious about stopping illegal immigration, it would have to get serious about preventing them from entering the country in the first place.

If the US were serious about stemming illegal immigration, it would place machine guns along the borders and kill the invaders. It would end its policy of "birthright citizenship," under which a Mexican whore can slip across the border, have a baby, and then apply for entry herself as the relative of a US citizen (the baby), under the US' "family reunification" immigration policy. If the US wanted to stop illegal immigration, it would make illegal entry into the country a capital offense, and hang a few illegal aliens – in public, as is done, e.g., in Cairo, Egypt. It could hire a few Saudi executioners to lop off a few heads, as is done each week in public as in Saudi Arabia. After a few positive steps such as these, the flow of illegal aliens would cease, within days.

When Kenya could not stop the extinction of the elephants by alien poachers, it instituted, at the urging of Richard Leaky, a "shoot-on-sight" policy. The poaching problem was promptly solved. Kenya introduced a shoot-on-sight policy to save the elephants not out of a concern for the elephants, but out of a concern for tourist dollars (see Richard Leakey's *Wildlife Wars*). The US will not implement such a policy because the alien invasion is *good for business*.

The US has a bizarre policy toward illegal aliens from Cuba. If they are apprehended while still on a boat, they are repatriated to Cuba. If they make it to US territory – even remote islands such as the Dry Tortugas (off the Florida Keys), they are allowed to remain in the US (this is called the "wet-foot / dry-foot" policy). If a few Cuban boats were machine-gunned, and the survivors sent back to Cuba to tell their tales, the flow of Cuban immigrants would quickly stop. Will the US do this? Of course not – each Cuban immigrant adds tens of thousands of dollars to the US gross national product.

On the news last week was a segment about a large gang of illegal aliens, called MS-13. It consists of thousands of illegal aliens from Central America. They are now raping and pillaging across America. I have written before about the large number of US citizens who are murdered by immigrants from Mexico, Asia, and other countries – MS-13 is just the latest manifestation. Why does the US government not take effective action against this group? Because it is better for business to let them stay and fight them with our hands tied behind our backs, as we did in Vietnam, as we are doing in Iraq, and as we are doing in all other aspects of national “defense.” It is great money for immigration lawyers, for border patrol agents, for security-system companies and everyone else involved in the ludicrous mass immigration movement that is boosting GNP while it destroys our culture and way of life. The silly process of letting aliens enter our country, “rounding them up,” processing them, and deporting a few will continue, because it is great for business.

(For more on the immigration problem, see Peter Brimelow’s *Alien Nation* (HarperCollins, 1995) and Jean Raspail’s *The Camp of the Saints* (1973, The Social Contract Press).)

US Citizenship for Sale

I have written before of my disdain for the US policy of giving away US citizenship in a lottery (50,000 per year, as I recall). When a country reaches the point where it considers its citizenship to be of so little value that it gives it away for free, it is nearing the end of its existence. A couple of weeks ago, I read an incredible article about a man who had invested in a redevelopment scheme in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The development effort had not gone well, however, and the man needed more cash to keep it alive. Evidently, there is a US law that offers residency visas to investors who bring USD500,000 to the US, and promise to try to create jobs or prevent loss of existing jobs. This is really disgusting. US citizenship for sale! Many people believe that the term “Babylon” used in the Book of Revelation refers to any large country or empire, such as Rome, or modern industrial civilization. America is now offering its citizenship to all comers, for the fee of one-half million dollars. Is America the Whore of Babylon?

(From the July 19 Spartanburg Herald-Journal article, “Cleveland looks to foreign investors,” by Robert W. Dalton: “Congress created the program, called the EB-5 visa, in 1990. Each year, 10,000 of these visas are available.” “Interested foreign investors would have to put up at least \$500,000 apiece and create or save at least 10 jobs to qualify for the opportunity to seek permanent residence status in the United States.”)

On Pat Robertson’s Remark Concerning the Assassination of Hugo Chavez

Two days ago, Rev. Pat Robertson speculated that the US might “take out” President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, since that was a lot less expensive than fighting another war like the one in Iraq.

Yesterday, he apologized for his remark, suggesting that he was “frustrated” when he made it.

Throughout history, religious leaders have prayed for enemy leaders to be vanquished. Our Arab opponents pray for this daily. The Jews employ assassination as a matter of course. Although it is a little surprising for a US religious leader to actually make such a remark in such a public and explicit fashion, religious leaders have generally been in solid support of the actions of the governments of their countries to destroy their enemies.

Relative to this incident, I am reminded of Henry Ford's comment, "Never complain, never explain," and Lee Iacocca's addition, "Never apologize."

The "Fair Tax"

My brother just mailed me a copy of the book, *The FairTax Book: Saying Goodbye to the Income Tax and the IRS*, by Neal Boortz and Congressman John Linder (Regan Books / HarperCollins, 2005). I started reading it yesterday. I have not finished it yet, so it is perhaps premature to comment on it, but it is interesting reading. In short, their proposal is to replace all US taxes by a 23 percent national sales tax.

As you know, I once wrote a book on US tax reform (*The Value Added Tax: A New Tax System for the US*), available on my website. I have considerable interest in taxes, and in particular in getting rid of the income tax. The proposal to replace the income tax with a value-added tax (VAT) never met with any success. If Boortz and Linder can get people to replace the income tax (and many other taxes) by a sales tax, that would be great. While some economists may argue that a sales tax "distorts" the economy, that is not a serious drawback, compared to the major benefit of getting rid of the income tax.

I recommend strongly that you purchase a copy of *The FairTax Book* and read it.

Gross Misuse of the Social Security Number

When the US Congress proposed the Social Security Act of 1933, it proposed assigning a numerical identifier – the Social Security Number – to all US citizens. There was a loud outcry over this – people did not want a universal numerical identifier. The US government promised that it would never allow the Social Security Number to become a universal identifier. Through the 1950s, when I was issued my Social Security Card, it was clearly marked, "For Social Security Purposes. Not for Identification." At that time, nobody but employers and banks asked for the number, in accordance with this agreement.

The US government has now reneged on its promise. Not only has it allowed the Social Security Number (SSN) to become a universal numerical identifier, it uses it itself as an identifier in many data systems other than Social Security.

For years, I have refused to provide my SSN to any organizations except banks or any organization explicitly authorized to use the SSN. Gradually, it became harder and harder to do so. In 1986, it took me some time to find a mortgage company that would accept my application without the Social Security Number. The dialogue is usually the same. The requestor states that they need the SSN to make a credit check, that the credit bureaus use the SSN as an identifier and they cannot run the credit check without it. I point out that the SSN is totally unnecessary to run the credit check – that I will gladly supply my name, age and address, and since there are few or no instances of the same person of the same age and the same name residing at the same address, I can readily be identified by any credit bureau possessing data about me.

When I returned to the US this spring, I observed a very noticeable change since my departure three years before. Virtually all businesses are asking customers for the SSN. The cable companies, the telephone companies, the automobile insurance companies, and the home insurance companies, to cite the ones that I had to deal with right away. Also the state driver's license agency, and the doctor's office. The message was very clear: either provide us with

your SSN, or we will not do business with you. After a number of telephone discussions, it was clear that, in 2005, any person who refuses to disclose his SSN is going to be denied most of the services that people take for granted (such as telephone or television) or need (such as insurance, a home mortgage, medical insurance, a driver's license, or a government security clearance).

I have pointed out to several of the requestors that the most careless thing that a person can do to make himself vulnerable to identity theft is to reveal his SSN to anyone. It is not that the requestor's business intends to defraud the individual – it is when they lose their customer data files or have them stolen that the problem arises. And instances of massive data losses and thefts are now commonplace news items. Recently it seems that horrific stories of identity theft are presented every few nights on the evening television news. The July 31 issue of *Parade* magazine has a feature article (by Lynn Brenner) about General John M. Shalikashvili's experience. Along with his picture on the cover are the banners: "His Was Stolen: How Safe Is Your Identity? What you must do to protect yourself. Retired Gen. John M. Shalikashvili: After his Social Security number was published in the Congressional Record, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff became a victim of identity theft."

The victims of identity theft lose hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars trying to clear up the problem, and usually never fully succeed. Their credit records and reputations are permanently damaged. When a business asks me for my SSN, I ask it why on earth they want me to give it to them, when this makes me vulnerable to identity theft. They don't care about my risk, and so few people refuse that they don't care that they lose their business. It is not just for thousand-dollar mortgages that the SSN is requested – it is for items as minor as the installation of a cable TV hookup, with little financial value involved.

I asked the last businessperson with whom I spoke on the matter why people willingly divulge their SSNs to her when this is such a foolish, risky, and dangerous thing to do. She told me that young people were used to giving their SSNs out – that it is only some of the older people, like me, who protest or refuse. If people are going to continue to allow the use of the SSN, then they are going to continue to be victims of identity theft. In the case of the SSN, all it takes to correct the problem is for the government to live up to its promise that it would never allow the SSN to become a national identifier. It lied, but it is not too late to right this wrong. If you care about this problem, which has a good likelihood of affecting you, why don't you tell your Congressman or Senator about it?

The "So-Called" Right to Privacy

A number of years ago, Robert H. Bork was nominated for Supreme Court Justice. Bork is one of the US' most distinguished legal scholars (see his book *Slouching towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (ReganBooks / HarperCollins, 1996) for an example of his writing). His nomination was very contentious, and he ultimately lost the appointment to Clarence Thomas.

One of the reasons why Bork was disliked was that he made the statement that Americans do not have a Constitutional right to privacy. Americans did not want to hear this, even though it is true, and they "shot the messenger."

A similar situation occurred recently. The nominee to replace Sandra Day O'Connor, John Roberts, is being subjected to the same vilification as Bork was, and for the same reason. He made reference once to the "'so-called' right to privacy." As in the case and time of Bork,

Americans do not want to hear this. They believe that they have a God-given right, an “unalienable” right, to privacy, and they will shun anyone who implies otherwise. (A “right” is a simply a privilege granted by your government.) On a local (Spartanburg, SC) television station on August 26, a political advertisement was aired, blasting Roberts for implying that Americans do not have a Constitutional right to privacy. Speaking the truth can be very detrimental to your political career, particularly making reference to restrictions on individual freedom in a permissive society dedicated to radical individualism and radical egalitarianism.

I experience this sort of thing all the time, relative to my assertion that industrial civilization will collapse as Hubbert’s peak (the decline in global oil production) occurs. I have been banned from Internet discussion groups (“don’t ever run Caldwell”) and blasted in “blogs” for saying things – no matter how well supported by facts – that Americans simply do not want to hear.