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PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Website: www.chroniclesmagazine.org
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.

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Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture
(ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for \$39.00
(foreign subscriptions add \$12 for surface delivery,
\$48 for Air Mail) per year by The Rockford Institute,
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061.
Preferred periodical postage paid at Rockford, IL
and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054.

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Chronicles

Vol. 26, No. 5 May 2002
Printed in the United States of America

On Arafat and Sharon

I agree with Srdja Trifkovic ("Time for Arafat to Go," *The American Interest*, February) that Yasser Arafat is not the best leader for the Palestinians and may well be an impediment to peace. But Dr. Trifkovic repeats a common misconception when he says, in effect, that the Israeli offer at Camp David was just too good to pass up. Despite what the media have led many to believe, Israel did not offer the Palestinians anything like an independent state. True, former prime minister Ehud Barak would have ceded 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, but these percentages are misleading. In fact, the proposal would have kept critical areas under Israeli rule so that the future Palestinian state would have been not a contiguous entity, like any other country, but a group of isolated Bantustans. Maps of the proposed settlement, which were never shown to the American people, make this abundantly clear. In short, the Barak proposal would have condemned Palestinians to perpetual servitude, and it is safe to say that no Arab negotiator could have accepted it.

As for Arafat's continued support of "terror," it is worth remembering that David ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, never moved against the Irgun or the Stern Gang until after the state of Israel was established and secured. Essentially, Sharon is demanding that Mr. Arafat do something that the Israelis themselves refused to do when fighting for their own state.

In March, a court in Brussels was scheduled to decide whether Sharon would stand trial on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide—charges stemming from his involvement in the 1982 massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. But in the eyes of many, Sharon, with his bloody résumé, is already a certifiable war criminal. Meanwhile, he has deliberately undermined our recent coalition with the Muslim world by invading Bethlehem and five other main Palestinian-controlled towns, killing Palestinian officials with American-made Apache helicopters and building even more illegal settlements. When

ever peace is about to break out, his hit teams assassinate yet another Palestinian leader. By such actions, he fuels Muslim rage. With each passing day, it becomes more difficult to justify U.S. support, not of Arafat, but of Sharon.

In short, neither Arafat nor Sharon is the best of leaders, but to think that a replacement for Arafat would reach an acceptable peace agreement with Israel is illusory. Removing Arafat would begin the spiral toward a lengthy and bloody war of attrition, which would be dangerous not only for Israel but for the United States.

—Frank J. Messmann
Falmouth, MA

Dr. Trifkovic Replies:

On the whole, I have no quarrel with Mr. Messman's assessment of the unlovely Ariel Sharon or with his timely reminder that different brands of terrorism are morally equivalent, regardless of the identity of perpetrators.

With regard to the shortcomings of the proposed Camp David package, Mr. Messman is preaching to the choir: I agree that the deal was far from perfect, and it was certainly open to criticism on moral and practical grounds. We differ on what I wrote—which is a matter of record—and on what Yasser Arafat should have done in the final months of the Clinton presidency, which is a matter of opinion.

For the record, I did not say "in effect, that the Israeli offer at Camp David was just too good to pass up." I simply stated that the deal offered there "accurately reflected the limits of Israeli flexibility at that time." My statement was a value-neutral factual assessment, and neither side in the Middle Eastern divide would dispute it.

It is still my considered opinion that the Palestinian Arabs, and everyone else, would have been better off had Mr. Arafat signed the agreement offered at Camp David. Politics is the art of the possible: Within a few years, the Camp David framework would likely have evolved into the irreducible minimum, not the final and immutable limit of Palestinian aspirations. The Israeli with-

drawal from the remaining four percent of occupied territories would have been only a matter of time, and Palestinian statehood would have become a reality.

In the 19th century, as small Christian nations of the Balkans struggled to regain their statehood after centuries of Ottoman Muslim misrule, a period of autonomy under the nominal suzerainty of the sultan for some—Serbs, Bulgars, Rumanians—was a painful but necessary stepping stone on the road to full independence. An incremental strategy worked well for Finland under the Romanovs—so well, in fact, that it possessed many attributes of *de facto* statehood well before the Bolshevik Revolution. Kosuth's uprising against the Habsburgs failed in 1848-49 because his maximalist demands went far beyond the limits of Vienna's tolerance, but the *Ausgleich* of 1867 created preconditions for full-fledged Hungarian statehood in the aftermath of World War I. Had the fathers of the Irish Free State demanded immediate full independence for the whole of Ireland—Ulster included—in the aftermath of World War I, the road to Eire would have been longer and bloodier. In all of these cases, the interim solution fell short of optimal demands but provided a firm foothold for the next generation.

As he endures the humiliation of the Israeli Defense Force bivouacking in his Ramallah compound, while the death toll on both sides moves from dozens into the hundreds, Mr. Arafat would be well advised to ponder these and similar lessons of history. I suspect that his private thoughts on the subject are closer to my assessment of what he should have done at Camp David than to Mr. Messman's.

On Russell Kirk's Legacy

A person who has been ravaged by liberalism might loudly attack Scott P. Richert for his reminiscences on Russell Kirk's noble reclamation project in Mecosta County ("Ghosts of the Midwest," *Views*, February), especially if that person were a partisan of all things Native American. The logic goes like this: Native Americans, the true Agrarians, first settled the Michigan countryside around Piety Hill. The despoliation caused by lumber barons was a blight against the sylvan heritage of the Native Americans, not merely an assault on the idyllic lands of the

white man. Russell Kirk was a white man. Therefore, the fruits of his revival of Mecosta County should be tendered to those original victims of industrial expansion, the Native Americans.

Whether this logic makes any sense may not unduly worry the fretful liberal, impassioned as he often is by the animus of righteous indignation and the spirit of vindication; but Mr. Richert, for the sake of history as opposed to hagiography, might have mentioned those benighted redskins, if only to put into context the continual and complex problems of development. Development is necessarily bound up with an ongoing sequence of evolutionary events and dynamics of the sort that one sees when observing the prized wilderness. Species thrive; environments change; species perish.

To have expanded the logic behind such environmental fluctuations, Mr. Richert might have zeroed in on the poignancy of the very problem of Dr. Kirk's fecundity: With four daughters to his credit, values aside, the good doctor, like Henry Ford, did his own part in keeping strong "the forces of indiscriminate growth," which are abetted, in part, by population expansion. What the true liberal might not understand is that population growth does not logically lead to ecological degradation. There is no deterministic relationship between the two processes of life. It would have been to Mr. Richert's credit, however, if he would at least have outlined the conundrum of the relationship between expanding populations and diminishing resources. If Kirk's progeny decide that Wal-Marts are better than tree-lined saddle ridges and hardwood copses, then all those trees may go the way of all flesh all over again.

—Tony Daley
Chicago, IL

Mr. Richert Replies:

I'm not sure how a discussion of American Indians would have "put into context the continual and complex problems of development." The history of Indians in Michigan, a subject in which Dr. Kirk was very interested, is somewhat different from that of Indians on the East Coast or the Great Plains. Tribes were smaller, more settled, and (generally) more peaceful. Yes, there were Indians in Central Michigan (though not nearly as many as one might think), and many of their de-

scendants remain there today, having intermarried with free blacks to become the "Old Settlers" of whom Dr. Kirk was so fond. Indians and Old Settlers were largely assimilated into the later European communities of Central Michigan, though there is a Chippewa reservation in Mount Pleasant, which runs an enormously successful casino and hotel complex, constructed by destroying a large stand of forest on the east side of town.

Which brings me to Mr. Daley's second point. Of course human beings make choices, and the Chippewa of Mount Pleasant have decided that their economic "progress" is more important than trees and virgin soil. Dr. Kirk's children and mine could both decide that "Wal-Marts are better than tree-lined saddle ridges and hardwood copses," though, to be honest, I doubt that either will. What, exactly, does this have to do with "population expansion"? Again, we're back to the question of choice or, more precisely, free will. An only child could choose Wal-Mart just as easily as a child with three siblings could—perhaps more easily, because Wal-Mart plays into the dynamics of instant gratification that, in general, afflict only children more fully than those from larger families. If the problem were not the texture of population expansion (for instance, growth of native populations *versus* immigration) but simply that sheer numbers translate into "indiscriminate growth" (something that Virginia Abernethy has decisively disproved, in these pages and elsewhere), then the only way to prevent our progeny from choosing Wal-Mart over hardwood copses would be to quit having children altogether. That would certainly preserve "nature," but without man to enjoy and tame it, what would that "nature" be?

On *Chronicles* in the Classroom

Congratulations to Dr. Roger McGrath for his efforts in the fight against cultural Marxism. Dr. McGrath's articles and columns in *Chronicles* have become required reading in the 11th-grade U.S. history courses that I teach at Hamilton High School in Los Angeles. Please continue your fine work.

—Kieley D. Jackson
Los Angeles, CA



ANDREA YATES, the Houston mother recently sentenced to life in prison for drowning her five children in the bathtub, has become the latest horror story in an alarming string of domestic atrocities occurring in the wake of mental-health drug treatment. From the killer kids of Columbine, to the sickies of Springfield, Oregon, and Santee, California, to U.S. Capitol cop-killer Russell Eugene Weston runs an almost predictable pattern of antidepressant drug treatment (sometimes coupled with other psychotropic drugs intended to counter the side effects of the first or to deal with other alleged mental illnesses), followed by the loss of impulse control.

Maybe I'm missing the finer points of Mrs. Yates' preparation for trial, but does this make sense? Here's a woman who methodically drowned all five of her children, so doctors give her megadoses of psychotropic drugs until she is *sane* enough to stand trial for murders she committed while on megadoses of psychotropic drugs? If she is "sane" now, on the new drug regimen, how was anyone to know whether she was sane *then* on the *old* drug regimen?

Doesn't this bring criminal justice to a whole new level? If someone does something illegal—anything at all, like speeding—while taking a prescription psychotropic drug, couldn't lawyers just argue that, well, this person was prescribed thus-and-such drug by a doctor, and if the judge will simply order a revised drug regimen, the accused would be happy to drive down the same street again at the posted speed limit?

Of course, Mrs. Yates was said to be suffering from a particularly severe form of postpartum depression. Some hypothesized that her husband was partly to blame by keeping his wife continually pregnant, resulting in physical and emotional exhaustion. Others presumed some causal link between the "social isolation of homeschooling" and the simultaneous stress of infant care. Yet I could find no recorded incident of this magnitude in the days before birth control, modern anesthetics, and "opportunities" for women—when large families, long hours, and few amenities were the norm. Given the money the Yates family spent on mental-health treatment, including on psychiatrist Muhammad Saeed and

various drugs prescribed over the years, Mrs. Yates could have hired some help at home. She could have had her "tubes tied"—a simple outpatient procedure—had she been desperate to avoid further pregnancies. But by all accounts, she loved her children and her husband dearly. Something else had to be going on.

There has been a shift in the ethical winds in the field of medicine. Psychotropic drugs do not appear to be held to the same standard as other medications. Whether this is because of profiteering by drug manufacturers or whether people have been so taken in by the promise of feel-good medications and insist upon having them is unclear. What *is* clear is that the safety criteria for mental-health products are not as rigorous as for those aimed at physical well-being, like antibiotics and painkillers.

Fifteen years ago, I was prescribed a painkiller called Zomax following dental surgery. It stopped the throbbing immediately; didn't make me sleepy, "spacey," or nauseous; and wasn't habit-forming. Two years later, I was under the knife again for an abscessed tooth. I expected another Zomax prescription. I was told it had been pulled from the market. The substitute medication I was given not only didn't work but made me sick. Pacing the floor with a throbbing jaw, I was furious. Why did a perfectly good drug get pulled?

One person apparently had died from it, my dentist said.

"One person?" I spat. "One person, and a drug line gets pulled?" That seemed a huge overreaction, until I thought about it. I guess that's why we have a Food and Drug Administration. Only in America would the death of one person warrant rethinking an entire product line—except in the case of psychotropic drugs.

Of course, one expects individual ("idiosyncratic") reactions to most drugs. But when the brain is the target of treatment, not only is the patient at risk of adverse reactions, so is society.

There are two schools of thought concerning the use of psychotropic drugs. One, from the mental-health industry, insists that troubled individuals who see a psychiatrist and are prescribed drugs simply evidence their need of them. The failure of the substances in question to

control violent impulses is viewed not as a failure of the drugs *per se* but as a failure of society to impose mandatory early-detection programs—for example, postnatal counseling for new mothers and behavioral screening for schoolchildren—the way schools and insurance companies demand physical examinations.

An opposing view—increasingly prevalent among pediatricians, neurologists, nutritionists, and allergists—is that mood-altering drugs are insufficiently tested and so unpredictable that they can push even normal adults over the edge, not to mention troubled individuals and children. These experts complain of pressure to attribute the physical complaints of patients to mental causes whenever a diagnosis is elusive, time-consuming, or costly.

Ann Blake Tracy, author and executive director of the International Coalition for Drug Awareness, points to a new level of suicides in recent years among patients prescribed antidepressants—not your typical sleeping-pill, wrist-slitting, carbon-monoxide variety, but grisly, masochistic methods like dismemberment with a chain saw. While antidepressant drugs are not supposed to be habit-forming, getting off of them, she says, frequently results in "strange and terrible thoughts," including suicide, which last long after the drug or drug cocktail is stopped.

Depression and anger appear to be a particularly volatile mix. Both tend to be treated with antidepressants, based on the theory that chronic anger is a form of depression. But what if anger and depression are not two sides of the same coin? Suppose the worst possible thing an angry person could do is to take an antidepressant. It's certainly beginning to look that way, especially when the antidepressant is combined with a powerful antipsychotic drug such as Haldol, which was prescribed for Mrs. Yates.

Most psychotropic drugs haven't been around long enough to determine even the short-term effects, much less long-term ones, a fact that's obvious from the pharmaceutical literature on antidepressant drugs. Yet they are marketed for everything from compulsive shopping to discomfort in crowds. Children are particularly vulnerable to side effects because their brain circuitry and hormones