



# Big Boy Economics

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

The high honor and awesome responsibility of a Democratic presidential nomination is now within reach of Arkansas' most celebrated governor since Orval Faubus. Each day Boy Clinton provides yet another revelation of the marvels he has wrought.

At the outset of the saga, our hero leaped to center stage, proclaiming himself a bold innovator eons removed from his party's long line of fatuous big-spenders and sure losers. Boy Clinton would champion Growth, Fiscal Sanity, Competitiveness, and hey-get-me-the-name-of-that-pretty-girl-in-the-third-row. Then the primaries began and he encountered the real innovator among the Democratic candidates, Paul Tsongas. Soon Boy Clinton's ads were depicting Tsongas as an agent of Wall Street and a menace to Social Security.

Now he has revealed his panaceas for the economy, and it is manifest that Clinton is as much a believer in social engineering and Big Government as he was back in 1972 when he campaigned for George McGovern, the most radical Democratic presidential nominee in modern times. Today, all over the world, stagnant economies are overthrowing Big Government and opting for free markets, yet at the Wharton School of Business the other day, Boy Clinton offered a hoary program of tax breaks, subsidies, and trade policies for special business ventures—in sum and in fine: an elite corps of government experts with magic wands to oversee all areas of the economy. It is the Planned Economy of 1936 with a facelift.

Clinton's fundamental error is his be-

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lief that bureaucrats and professors know more about promising products and profits in various markets than entrepreneurs. But what if by some freak occurrence the bureaucrats and professors are wrong about a product?

Will they successfully prevail on President Clinton to end government support and allow bankruptcy? Experience has demonstrated at heavy cost to the taxpayer that this is not Big Government's way. As Milton Friedman, a genius among twentieth-century economists, explains, "Government actions often provide concentrated benefits while imposing widely distributed costs." The special interests reaping those benefits can always confect



a compelling case for maintaining them.

If Clinton succeeded in setting up his agencies for encouraging ventures thitherto unrecognized by free market entrepreneurs, only one thing is certain: Big Government would get bigger. After all, in recent years Big Government's only notable success has been to increase the military, win the arms race, and bankrupt

the Soviet Union—an admirable achievement, but then governments were originally constituted to protect the citizenry. In his 1991 Wriston Lecture to the Manhattan Institute, Friedman explains why government bureaucrats are no improvement on free markets: "If [an] enterprise were an obvious success, it would probably already be in existence. If the enterprise is a failure that means it loses money. The people who own it have a very clear bottom line." They can keep it going only if they can afford to lose money or finagle a government subsidy, but, continues Friedman, "if a government enterprise is a failure, it is expanded. I challenge you to find an exception."

Another way of responding to Boy Clinton's scheme is to remind him that government ceased to be a solution for social and economic problems in the 1960s, when it lost the capacity to say no to militants and to the morally superior. Today it cannot even say no to dangerously anti-social louts. Only the law-abiding have to fear its authority. The front page of the *New York Times* tells us of a 34-year-old homeless man who "is considered a walking public health threat." He is a carrier of tuberculosis and tests HIV-positive. He is violent, suffers from schizophrenia, and capriciously checks himself in and out of scores of government centers at great cost and peril to all involved. Government cannot quarantine him, as it might have at the turn of the century. Yet let minor infractions of the health code be committed by an otherwise law-abiding restaurateur and—whammo.

Examples of government's futility abound. The loon who assaulted former President Ronald Reagan the other day is at large on his own recognizance. He appeared on "CBS This Morning" free to

pontificate, because a magistrate could not adjudge him a danger to society. In Morristown, New Jersey, a foul-smelling mischief-maker is free to disrupt the local library because government cannot say no and in fact had to give him a small fortune for denying him his right to stare at patrons and otherwise harass

them. Still Boy Clinton places his faith in Government. As for me, I am off to Morristown to encourage the town's shapely librarian to complain that the library's tormentor stares at her bodily parts. One can be a harasser, but woe to the *sexual harasser*—suggesting another point: Our Government is incoherent. □

er expand on the backs of the middle class.

In truth, Labour's historic defeat should not have been all that surprising. It is part of a world-wide trend, noted right after the election by Peter Jenkins in Britain's center-left paper the *Independent*. "Marxist socialism has declared its bankruptcy," he wrote, "and the social democratic era is drawing more gently to a close. Liberal capitalism is in the ascendant." People just do not believe that they can pay ever more in taxes to a state that promises ever more and delivers ever less. The left is no longer plausible, and frankly I doubt that many on the left believe in their blah.

On election night in London, at a party given by conservative publisher Conrad Black, I chanced upon Michael Kinsley. On CNN's "Crossfire" and in numerous publications he plays the role of the paradigmatic American Liberal. So what is it that the paradigmatic Liberal still believes in? It appears that he believes in very little aside from raising taxes and jeering at conservatives. That is not much of an agenda. □

## My Maxim

Spending, as I have, the last few weeks on political assignment abroad, in tropical Grenada, democratic Czechoslovakia, London, and now our nation's capital, I excogitated a political maxim that I hereby submit to the professors of political science and other such riffraff. My maxim is: a citizenry living in prosperity and freedom becomes politically carefree; a citizenry living in poverty and tyranny is not so silly.

In Grenada and Czechoslovakia political misjudgments brought tyranny and poverty. Now Grenadians and Czechs follow politics with more care. In the prosperous West, politics has been reduced to a matter of self-expression. Frequently a man's politics serve the same purpose as a gaudy tie or chartreuse suspenders—all are meant to suggest the wonders of the inner man. Likewise, the female of the species living in a prosperous democracy chooses her politics as she chooses her hemlines and hair color. Amusement is everything.

Just recently many French, Germans, and Italians indulged their vanities by voting against their countries' established parties and for an implausible selection of extremists, misanthropes, and nincompoops. In America it is said that there is pervasive "voter dissatisfaction," and indeed some fifty percent of the citizenry does not vote. Actually it is not "voter dissatisfaction" that keeps Americans from the polls, but their carefree attitude toward the great game of politics. If Americans get it into their heads that the fall elections might lead to a dramatic reduction in their freedom or their incomes, they will vote as eagerly as they attend sports events. The astonishing defeat of Britain's Labour party proves as much.

I was in London for the elections. British Conservatives have been in power for thirteen years and, according to the pollsters, have become a bore. The country is slogging through its longest recession since the Depression. Prime Minister John Major ran a lusterless campaign, and all the polls agreed he and his party would be bounced. No commentator or politician I met either on the left or the right predicted a Conservative victory except for a young editorial writer at the *Daily Telegraph*, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard. How do we explain it?

It is true that Labour had discarded its loonier leftists, but it had not discarded tax increases, intrusive government, and the unpleasant music of class warfare. What is more, despite Labour's blood-curdling threats against the rich, voters began to realize that Labour's tax increases were going to hit the middle class—beginning with annual incomes of \$37,000—as they always do. Voters who had boasted to pollsters of their desire for change considered their freedom and their incomes and took politics more seriously. My maxim lives!

And the fatuous response of many American pundits to Labour's defeat further validates my axiom. After all, American pundits are among the freest and most prosperous alive. No wonder they are so unserious about their politics. In the aftermath of the British elections columnist Anthony Lewis, whose brain is apparently never to be freed from the Liberal glacier, selected his comments with the same narcissistic regard as he chooses his colored socks for an evening at the theater. To him it was all middle class selfishness and disregard for "health, education, and poverty"—as though Britain's welfare state can forev-

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## Darwin in the Dock

by Tom Bethell

“If evolution did take place,” Joe Tussman was saying, “God could have used that method for his own purposes.”

“How do we know that evolution did take place?” replied Phillip Johnson, seeming not to grasp the logic of the statement. Johnson is a professor of law, and Tussman an emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of California in Berkeley. The conversation was taking place at Johnson’s house in Berkeley at 8:00 a.m. over breakfast. His wife, Kathie, was pouring coffee, and several other people were sitting at the table. In little over an hour Johnson would be speaking to the Southwestern Anthropological Association. The group was holding its annual meeting at the Berkeley Marina Marriott Hotel, a five-minute drive from Johnson’s house.

“He said ‘If evolution took place,’” someone else said, perhaps thinking Johnson hadn’t heard right.

“How do we know that evolution occurred?” Johnson repeated. Now he was plainly refusing the conversational gambit. “No one ever puts it the other way around: If God exists, what reason is there to believe in blind, naturalistic evolution in the first place?”

Johnson himself doesn’t believe in it. The evidence doesn’t support that hypothesis, he thinks. And if you believe in God—which he does—there’s no reason to settle for a passive deity who presides over but never interferes with the haphazard results of chance and mutation.

Professors at Christian colleges, cowed by the culture into accepting the false equation of Darwinism and science, often don’t get the point here, Johnson

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said. “‘Oh well,’ they say, ‘we believe in Darwinistic evolution and we’re still Christian. So what’s the problem?’” The problem is that their students realize there is no role for a creator in such a system, Johnson said, and they turn agnostic in droves.

“But if your question is, ‘Can you reconcile some vague or weak Christianity with evolution?’” Johnson went on, “of course if you want to badly enough you can.”

By now it was time to be moving along to the Marriott. Johnson would be addressing a plenary session of the conference.

It’s not every day that you meet with such sentiments from a tenured professor at Berkeley’s law school. How did it happen? About fifteen years ago, Johnson experienced a personal and an intellectual crisis. His first marriage broke up, and when he told his daughter, he found himself ready to rethink his whole life. He went to the Presbyterian Church on College Avenue. Listening to the minister, he thought: “You know, this guy really believes what he’s saying. He lives it. And I could too.”

Professionally, he had made the right moves. He had gone to Harvard, then to the University of Chicago Law School; graduated top of his class, clerked for California Supreme Court Justice Roger Traynor, then for Chief Justice Earl Warren (1966-67 term). In 1967 he became a member of the faculty at Berkeley, published articles, earned tenure. “But nothing made any sense,” he said. All was shallow and self-defeating. Colleagues in the academy “could give you a thousand reasons why no positive statement could be supported. But they could give no reason to believe in anything that was important.”

The idealistic spirits had decried mon-

ey-grubbing corporate law. So Johnson had gone into criminal law. “And for twenty years now, academic lawyers have been worrying about the problems of crime,” he said. “They made a complete hash of it, and I was one of them.” (Recently, by the way, he wrote an introduction to a new edition of Anthony Lewis’s book *Gideon’s Trumpet*.)

In 1987, when he was a visiting professor at University College, London, he came across some books about evolution. *The Blind Watchmaker*, by Richard Dawkins, made a particular impression. The book makes the argument, familiar since Darwin, that random processes are sufficient to explain the existence of animals and plants, without having to invoke a creator. Johnson saw that actual evidence for evolution wasn’t in the book, however. This was papered over by rhetoric, “just the kind of stuff that lawyers do,” he told Russell Schoch of the *California Monthly*. “It gets you to accept the conclusion as an assumption and then carries you along with the brilliance of the argument.”

Johnson continued to study evolution for several years, and his book *Darwin on Trial* was published by Regnery Gateway in 1991. Since then he has received many invitations to speak. His colleagues at the law school (Boalt Hall) have been tolerant, he said as he drove to the hotel. He’s tactful—helps out with teaching loads and so on. But now he expected to meet some resistance from the anthropologists.

At the hotel, Johnson had a small entourage of supporters. John Wiester and Arthur Battson had come up from Santa Barbara, and there were one or two others from the Ad Hoc Committee on Origins—Walter Hearn from Berkeley, for example. These are evangelical Christians who are well in-