



Clinton's Trickle-Down

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Trickle down, trickle down—ha, ha, ha. From (roughly) William Jennings Bryan's 1896 "Cross of Gold" speech to President Bill Clinton's ramblings in his State of the Union address on February 17, progressives have been deriding almost any attempt by government to encourage the creation of wealth as "trickle-down economics": Ha, ha, ha, Ronald Reagan believes profits "trickle down."

Well, now with the sonorous unveiling of President Bill Clinton's characteristically schizophrenic economic package, behold what we might call the progressives' version of trickle-down economics. According to their version, the dividing line between the fat cat and the rest of us steadily "trickles down" from an annual income of \$200,000 (that being the figure intoned by presidential candidate Clinton) to an annual income of \$100,000 (that being the figure intoned by President Clinton on February 15) to an annual income of \$30,000 (that being the figure intoned by his loyal mouthpiece Mr. George Stephanopoulos on February 16) to an annual salary of \$20,000 (that being the level at which the onerous energy taxes announced on February 17 kick in). Fellow fat cats, grab your wallets and run.

In accordance with earlier trickle-down economics, the benefits of higher economic output trickle down to the rest of us. In accordance with the tax-and-spend Democrats' trickle-down econom-

ics, the burdens of higher taxation trickle down to the rest of us. Ah, but the *New York Times* reassures us that a White House official insists that "households with incomes of less than \$30,000 . . . will not have their taxes increased at all." Yet a few months ago candidate Clinton promised only to raise taxes on \$200,000-a-year voluptuaries drinking Dom Perignon and eating bonbons in Palm Beach. As for the "forgotten middle class," its taxes would be cut. Now its taxes are being raised. Even Clinton's idea of what constitutes a millionaire has trickled down: he's proposed a millionaire's tax, all right—on anyone making over \$250,000 annually. Well, there you have the tax-and-spend Democrats' trickle down, and I do not hear anyone laughing. At the third presidential debate, George Bush warned that the Clinton tax hike would trickle down to those earning \$36,600. Three times in pre-election columns I warned as much. Thankfully, I was not running for office.

There is something very odd about the candidate who promised to lower the taxes he is now raising. He insists that he is going to stay in touch with American people, but all evidence indicates that he has usually been strangely out of touch. He believes that during the longest period of American peacetime economic growth (from November 1982 to July 1990) only the very rich benefited. More than \$20 trillion in new wealth was created during that period. Does he really believe that all those trillions went only to the very rich? Why did the middle class keep electing Republican presidents? Now he speaks as though the

United States were in recession (during the election he spoke of depression). On February 15 he said "the typical middle-class family is working harder for less." Actually, the economy is growing at a hefty rate of 3.8 percent.

"The conditions which brought us to this point are well known," the president told Congress on February 17. Known by whom? Not Clinton. If the economy is in such a pallid state, where is the economic theory that counsels the gigantic tax increase President Clinton prescribes? There is none. "There's no coherent economic theory to it," the economic columnist and former Treasury official Paul Craig Roberts remarks of Mr. Clinton's economic package. "All modern economic theory known of argues that this program will close down the economy. Tax hikes are described in economic texts today as policies that cool down overheated economies." But President Clinton declares the economy already as cold as a corpse, and so he will create 500,000 new (and temporary) jobs with deficit spending. Does he know that the Reagan economy created 18 million new jobs (most of which are still around and contributing wealth and tax revenue) with tax cuts? Raising taxes to lower a deficit while raising spending to stimulate an economy is another example of the schizophrenia suffered by our president with the policy wonk's brain and the flower child's heart.

He is America's greatest schizophrenic president. When he is not affecting the style of just folks he is bragging of his highbrow intellectual credentials. Throughout the 1980s just folks recog-

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nized that a growing economy was being made possible by lower taxes, restrained government growth, and restrained meddling. Meanwhile, the highbrow intellectual, securely enveloped in a haze of left-wing partisan politics, ignored the growth and spoke solely of pending calamity.

For them the 1980s never took place. It was American history's black hole. Throughout that decade, America's

infantile left kept conjuring up ever more problems—social, political, and economic—to be laid at the door of a president whose power they were steadily cutting back. Now because George Bush raised taxes and stymied a growing economy, these people who refused to learn from recent history have one of their own in the White House. My guess is that soon the conflicting burdens of that great office will break him. □

strains of tuberculosis now spreading through urban centers. They are contagious, can be spread by a mere cough, and assuredly can kill.

But we are told that tobacco smoke spread through the air by smokers who do not practice our youthful president's "safe smoking" is dangerous. The Environmental Protection Agency has produced a report arguing that a smoker's second-hand smoke increases the risk of lung cancer in nonsmokers and contributes to approximately 3,000 deaths annually. In truth, this report is another example of the EPA shaping scientific findings to support its own preconceived policies. The report, with all its shoddy science, will undoubtedly open the way for new health-based government regulations. Remarks Bonner Cohen of *EPA Watch* in Chantilly, Virginia, "It's now open season on whatever contaminant the EPA chooses to label the killer contaminant of the week."

To establish second-hand smoke as a killer of 3,000 hypothetical Americans, the EPA had to ignore the antithetical findings of a study sponsored by the National Cancer Institute. William Reilly, head of EPA, claimed his report was too far along to take into account those findings, but had he his report would not have been able to claim second-hand smoke as a carcinogen. Furthermore, the EPA report—in an unprecedented change in its statistical method—lowered the scientific threshold for declaring something a human carcinogen.

This politicization of science is going to keep Mrs. Clinton busy. Now that the EPA has lowered the standard of risk, not only can second-hand smoke be classified as a cancer risk but so can ordinary tap water, whose risk factor is twice that of second-hand smoke. The electromagnetic fields that emit from everyday consumer appliances such as electric blankets, hair dryers, computers, and cellular telephones make them up to four times as dangerous as second-hand smoke. And then there are all those fruits and vegetables seething with chemicals. Obviously, it is only a matter of time before the Clintons shut off the White House's electricity and settle down to growing their own greens. □

Hillary Polluted

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, and it certainly has brought grief to the reformist couple now resident at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Just the other day Hillary Rodham Clinton (known as just Hillary Clinton on the campaign trail) promised to introduce organic foods into the White House and to ban tobacco from the premises, saying that neither she nor President Clinton smokes. Alas, the little minds of the Washington press corps produced recent pictures of Mr. Clinton majestically chomping down on a cigar of Churchillian immensity. Apparently he resorted to the dratted stogie repeatedly on his campaign plane. And so, to banish Emerson's hobgoblins, the White House rushed out deputy press secretary Lorraine Voles to explain: “He never smokes it—he kind of chews it.” Leave it to our youthful president to devise “safe smoking.”

Yet if Mrs. Clinton stands by her edict on organic foods and tobacco, consistency will as a consequence of dubious government findings lead to the banning of apples, cellular telephones, computers, hot showers, chlorinated water. The White House will be a truly restful place. Today the life expectancy of the average American living outside the White House in regions unpatrolled by Mrs. Clinton is, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, greater than ever before. In Mrs. Clinton's White House, peo-

ple may live forever. If she responds as scrupulously to other environmental advocacy groups as she has responded to the advocates of organic foods and the opponents of tobacco, the smokeless, appleless White House—free of pesticides, radon and noxious electromagnetic fields—can be renamed the Green House.

I have no doubt that tobacco is not a health food. But does not dignity and freedom require that we allow adults to decide for themselves what substances they will consume so long as those substances do not threaten public health or safety? Right now there are far greater risks circulating among us than tobacco. Consider AIDS, which is not just dangerous; it is lethal. Or consider the new



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Impolitic Pol

by Tom Bethell

Two days after the left-wing Game Show Host addressed the Joint Session of Congress, I journeyed to Capitol Hill, in search of Capitol Ideas.

I was walking along the central corridor of the Capitol building and admiring the waxed, well-polished flagstones, when I spotted, striding in my direction from the Senate side, the tall, upright, blue-suited figure of Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah. I told him that I would shortly be seeing Sen. Al Simpson of Wyoming.

"Hit him hard on employer sanctions," Hatch said briskly. He was referring to the feature of the immigration law that penalizes employers for hiring undocumented ("illegal") immigrants. Its unintended effect was to doom Clinton's first two nominees for attorney general. Thanks in no small measure to the persistent efforts of Senator Simpson, the immigration law was revised in 1986 to include sanctions against employers. Hatch told me that they were "discriminatory" against minorities and placed an inappropriate law-enforcement burden on all. "Senator Kennedy and I are going to change it," Hatch said. "Simpson doesn't want it but we're going to."

As assistant minority leader, Simpson has an office in the Capitol building itself. An aide told me that the senator (who lives in McLean, Virginia) had been held up in traffic. Soon his long, lean frame appeared in the doorway. He smiled broadly and beckoned me to join him in his inner office, across the hall. It was furnished with realistic paintings of Western scenery, including a small Bierstadt, a scene by one of the "Taos Ten," and—point of pride—"no photographs of politicians."

He told me he was writing a book about the news media, which I gather

may not be wholly laudatory. At the time of the Clarence Thomas hearings, after an appearance on "Nightline," Simpson had a run-in with Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio. "She laid the F-word on me three times in 42 seconds," he told me. An aide brought me a cup of coffee, but Simpson himself, who is 61 and looking very fit, abstemiously confined himself to a glass of water. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1978. His parents, both in their nineties, still live in Cody. His father also was a U.S. senator, and before that governor of Wyoming.

I never could understand how Simpson became so involved in the immigration issue. Wyoming is believed to have fewer immigrants than any other state. (It also has fewer people.) For years I had darkly suspected that, in the course of some dinner party shortly after he arrived, the "Georgetown elite" had put Simpson up to it, knowing that there would be no constituency pressure on the issue from Wyoming. So how did it happen?

"I was a freshman senator, and they created the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy," he said. "They were looking for lawyers from the Judiciary Committee, and Howard Baker told Jimmy Carter, 'Here's Simpson.' I said to Baker, 'Why did you do that to me?' He said, 'You're the junior member of the Committee, and I think it's important that you go on there.' So Carter appointed me to the Commission. Then the Republicans took over the Senate, in 1980. At that point Senator Kennedy came to me and said, 'Well, I care very much about immigration and if Thurmond will let you set up a separate subcommittee, I'll be glad to serve as your ranking member. I can share with you about seventeen years of background. I know you and I won't

agree on a lot of it.' I said, 'Hell, let's go.' So we did."

My suspicions had not been so far off, then. Ted Kennedy! The principal lobbying support for the reform at that time came from organized labor—always eager to restrict the supply of unregulated labor.

I told Simpson that I had just met a senator who said to "hit him hard on employer sanctions." His demeanor remained calm, but something caught fire inside and burned briefly. "Well, I've been called everything," he said, his tone quiet and even and measured. "I've been through the fires of bigotry and racism and all that crap. I used to say, 'Don't quote to me from the Statue of Liberty.' It doesn't say on the base, Emma Lazarus said send us everybody you've got, legally or illegally. Employer sanctions are the guts of any kind of reform. The law before was that it was legal to hire an illegal, but illegal for the illegal to work. Now if that isn't the ultimate stupidity for a constitutional government . . ."

The only thing wrong with the law at present is that "maybe 40 percent of the documents presented to employers are fraudulent," he said. Producing fake ID has become "a cottage industry," so this session the Congress will take up a new national ID card, to be used "at the time of new hire." Under present law, amazingly enough, it is actually illegal for employers to ask prospective employees to produce green cards, or any other specific document, as proof of legality. This is thought to be discriminatory. The employer must fill out a form attesting that the employee is authorized to work, but is not at fault if the documents that support such a claim are faked.

Simpson does believe, however, that the threshold for making Social Security contributions, currently \$50 a quarter, should be raised—perhaps to \$300.

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington correspondent.