

This argument will be challenging for many libertarians because it is social criticism more than the economic or political criticism with which we are most familiar. It is not primarily a libertarian critique of government, with an argument of what the state has done wrong and how more minimalist policies would help. (But libertarians will find themselves cheering her attack on the loony, anti-culturalist school curriculum.) Nor is it primarily a statist critique of the market, with an argument about how enlightened government regulation could easily correct the situation. (But readers on the left will be gratified by her criticism of advertising.) This is primarily a work of social criticism, which is to say a critique of the more amorphous thing known as culture, and of those ubiquitous actors, ourselves. She is challenging every reader of every ideological persuasion to be on the lookout for these poisonous ideas.

When she attacks the vacuous instruction that masquerades as education in many schools, the target in the cross hairs is neither the teachers' union nor compulsory schooling laws. When she criticizes advertising, her object is not to devise regulations. Her object is to persuade us to turn off the TV and to keep a close eye on the school curriculum. Most any reader can find some part of himself in this book and therefore will find some small but genuine contribution he can make by taking its argument to heart.

The libertarian political philosophy works because it is well-grounded in truths about human nature. People are self-interested. They will work harder for something they own than for some amorphous common good. Their self-interest can be channeled towards cooperative ends. Those facts lead us to favor individual freedom over collective action or coercive centralization.

But these are not the only truths about human nature. It is equally true that we are born as helpless babies and not as fully grown economic men. Childhood is not merely a socially constructed artifact that we can deconstruct and reconstruct at will. This core idea of Hymowitz's book is certainly true. Children are not prepared for the autonomy appropriate to adults and will not automati-

cally become prepared for it. Treating small children as if they were adults really does threaten their future, and ours. □

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### **Grover Cleveland: A Study in Character** by Alyn Brodsky

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Reviewed by Lawrence W. Reed

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**H**aving just endured vacuousness on a grand scale in the last presidential campaign and eight years of verbal subterfuge and prevarication under Bill Clinton, Americans are in need of an inspiration from their political past. They have it in the person of our principled 22nd and 24th president, Grover Cleveland—brought to life in the past year by not one but two laudatory biographies. *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* by H. Paul Jeffers is an entertaining but barebones account of America's most underrated chief executive. It appeared in early 2000 but was soon eclipsed by Alyn Brodsky's superbly written and more thoroughly researched *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Character*. In admiration for their subject's honesty and candor, both authors cite this characteristic Cleveland remark: "What is the use of being elected or reelected unless you stand for something?"

Both books, appearing as they do in a climate of cynicism about the political process and the caliber of today's politicians, will surely rekindle an interest in Cleveland. In comparison to him, most recent aspirants for and occupants of America's highest public office look like rogues and pipsqueaks.

Historians rate Cleveland among the better half of presidents, and some have even labeled him "near-great." But he didn't fight a war and he didn't shmooze and slither his way to political power; nor did he exercise power as if he loved it for its own sake. He did the public's business honestly and frugally and otherwise left people alone. Historians who are deluded into thinking that "greatness" means expanding the frontiers of the coercive

state and throwing America's weight around the world don't have much time for titans of limited government like Grover Cleveland.

In many ways, Cleveland was a political freak even for his day. As Brodsky capably explains with numerous vivid examples, he time and again refused to do the politically expedient. The first Democrat in the White House since James Buchanan, he appointed the best people he could find, often earning the wrath of friends and party bigwigs because they didn't get the nod. As Brodsky puts it, "Here, indeed, was that rarest of political animals: one who believed his ultimate allegiance was to the nation, not to the party."

Cleveland never lusted for public office but was one of the few presidents who was carried forth on the shoulders of those who admired him for his character. The *New York Times*, which today endorses charlatans, panderers, and statists routinely, endorsed Cleveland for president in 1884 by declaring three reasons for voting for him: "1. He is an honest man. 2. He is an honest man. 3. He is an honest man." Just three years before, he was a little-known lawyer in Buffalo with a previous stint as a county sheriff under his belt. Between 1881 and his elevation to the presidency, he would be elected mayor of Buffalo and governor of New York—vetoing spend-thrift bills and battling corruption.

Cleveland was a big man—tipping the scales at 300 pounds at one point—but he stood firmly for small government. He vetoed more bills than all the previous 21 presidents combined. He did his homework when he tossed out hundreds of fraudulent pension claims tied, however tenuously, to the Civil War. He fought to lower tariffs even though his closest advisers warned him the issue was a political hot potato. He nixed many attempts to raid the treasury for the benefit of special interests, including "charitable" causes like helping drought-stricken farmers in Texas. He even opposed using public money for monu-

ments to honor veterans and other heroes, arguing that such things belong in the realm of private initiative.

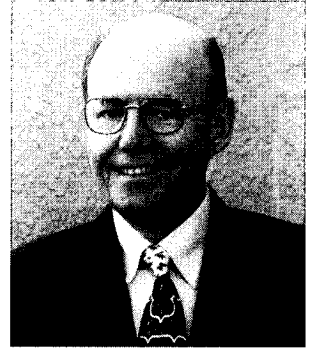
In foreign policy, he didn't see it as the duty of the American government to plant its flag smack in the middle of the affairs of other nations. If it wasn't clearly spelled out in the Constitution, Cleveland said forget it.

Cleveland had no formal training in economics, and neither does biographer Brodsky, but both in their own ways exhibit the traits of good economists—Cleveland for the way he handled complex issues like the monetary crises of the time, and Brodsky for his understanding that Grover did the right thing. In defense of sound money and the gold standard, the President navigated dangerous waters with perspicacity; in interpreting those actions, the biographer rises to Cleveland's defense with careful analyses. Brodsky even defends Cleveland's arrangement with financier J.P. Morgan to shore up the government's gold reserve—a necessary action usually scorned by historians of greater notoriety but of lesser economic intellect.

What I admire most about Cleveland, and what comes through clearly in Brodsky's work, is that his "character rather than his mind" informed his presidencies. He wasn't a Princeton brain like Wilson or a Rhodes Scholar like Clinton, but he drew strength from a reservoir of principled character with which neither Wilson nor Clinton will ever be associated. He favored freedom and limited government because he saw honesty as their antecedents.

After reading Alyn Brodsky's biography, one wonders if a Grover Cleveland could ever be elected again or, perhaps more important, if Americans will ever again muster the moral courage to shove the pipsqueaks aside and vote for such a man. □

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## It Depends on What the Meaning of “Advice” Is

After the November 2000 election then-President Clinton worked overtime to issue executive orders imposing regulations by presidential fiat that he was unable to persuade Congress to adopt. From the creation of national monuments that place millions of acres of land out of bounds to everyone except those approved by the environmentalist establishment, to workplace safety regulations designed to harass employers out of favor with the AFL-CIO and to give OSHA bureaucrats useless work to do, Clinton imposed extremist, costly interventionist policies supported by a wide variety of Democratic special-interest groups. President Bush has undertaken a review of these last-minute political payoffs to see how many of them he can reverse by executive order.

Here is a less well-known, last-minute Clinton policy imposition that President Bush ought to reverse. On January 10, only ten days before Bush’s inauguration, the Office of Labor-Management Standards in the Department of Labor, at Clinton’s behest, issued a new interpretation of Section 203(c) of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) of 1959. The Act was adopted by Congress principally to address widespread corruption and racketeering infesting labor unions during the 1950s that was uncovered by the McClellan Anti-Racketeering Committee. Title I of LMRDA

is a bill of rights for rank-and-file workers to protect them against rapacious union bosses. It has been only moderately successful in that regard.

Title II imposes various reporting requirements on people and organizations involved in labor relations. Section 202(a) requires unions to file annual reports on their expenditures with the secretary of labor. Section 203(a) imposes similar reporting requirements on employers regarding their expenditures related to labor relations. Section 203(b) imposes reporting requirements on “Every person who pursuant to any agreement or arrangement with an employer undertakes *activities* [emphasis added] where an object thereof is directly or indirectly to persuade employees” regarding whether or not to unionize. Section 203(c) says, “Nothing in this section shall be construed to require an employer or other person to file a report covering the services of such person by reason of his giving or agreeing to give *advice* [emphasis added] to such employer.” The “other person” refers to consultants hired by employers to help them avoid unionization of their employees.

Since 1962 the Department of Labor had interpreted Sections 203(b) and (c) to mean that if a union-avoidance consultant prepares written or other material that he then presents directly to employees, this constitutes 203(b) “activities” and triggers the reporting requirements. However, if the consultant’s materials are presented to employers, who then, on the advice of the consultants, present them to employees, this constitutes section 203(c)

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