

is the only advanced Western nation where family life is a private matter that government and employers have largely ignored.

Louv wants the government to ensure leave for parents after a baby is born, and he wants firms to recognize that family pressures often spill over into the workplace in the form of distracted employees and lost productivity. He suggests that companies offer more flex time and more part-time options to parents—not particularly innovative solutions.

Louv calls vaguely for “family liberation” and a “new web”: “As part of a family liberation movement, parents ought to demand more freedom in choosing their own work hours and their children’s school hours, thereby creating larger windows of family time. Our goal should be to help parents care for their children and to have the time to do it.” The children Louv interviewed seem to want these changes, but he never really convinces the reader that parents want family liberation. Many claimed that they work too many hours and don’t have enough time for their kids. But parents make choices, often preferring to pursue their own interests rather than spend time with their children.

The amount of time parents spend with their children has dropped 40 percent during the last quarter century, Louv reports. In 1965, the average parent had roughly 30 hours’ contact with his or her children each week. Today the figure is down to 17. It’s easy to say, “I don’t have time” and dodge the real reason some parents don’t spend time with their children: “I don’t have the desire or the patience.” Even when they have the chance, many parents don’t invest time in their children; instead, they depend on television and computers to babysit, or they fill their children’s schedules with organized activities away from home.

Throughout his book, Louv refers to the need for “a vast public effort, much of it by government,” to support the family, but he never outlines what kind of effort he has in mind. Still, the words are ominous. The money for this “vast public effort” would come from families who are already heavily burdened by taxes.

Moreover, whenever the government takes over family obligations, there’s the danger that it will replace rather than assist the family, ultimately weakening it. David Popenoe, professor of sociology at Rutgers University, writes in a recent issue of *The Public Interest* that this is precisely what has happened in Sweden, “where the family has grown weaker ...than anywhere else in the world.”

“What has happened to the family in Sweden over the past few decades,” Popenoe writes, “lends strong support to the proposition that as the welfare state advances, the family declines. If unchecked, this decline could eventually undermine the very welfare that the state seeks to promote....The family in the welfare state may become so weak that it is unable or unwilling to provide the kind of personalized child rearing that it alone can offer.” That ought to give any policy maker pause.

Louv keeps returning to his memories of growing up outside Kansas City, at the

far edge of suburbia. “How much of who we are, as creative adults, was formed long ago on a slow summer day, watching the trees move?” he asks. He recalls going with his pet collie to the woods near his home, where he would “build my own world out of small mysteries: exploring near a farm hidden away next to a swamp, lost in those woods; climbing a poplar, one of the tall, straight hedge trees overlooking the corn fields, clear to the top, until the trunk was three inches thick, until it began to bend and sway in the Missouri wind.”

While this sounds like the ideal American childhood, it is hardly typical, even for those raised in the ’50s or ’60s. Louv identifies some genuinely disturbing trends, but his understanding of them is skewed by an idiosyncratic standard. He wants America to recapture not just childhood but *his* childhood.

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Telephone Man

BY JEROME ELLIG

After the Breakup: U.S. Telecommunications in a More Competitive Era
By Robert Crandall, Washington: Brookings Institution, 174 pages, \$25.95

Ever wonder why your phone bill has 10 pages of itemized charges? Since the Bell System breakup in 1984, the economics, politics, and technology of telecommunications have all been incredibly messy. Nevertheless, Robert Crandall, senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution, has written a book that covers all three topics well.

After the Breakup explains what’s regulated, what’s not, and why it all matters. And those who are intimidated by—or just impatient with—the complex jargon and economics of telecommunications will be happy to know that this is a relatively user-friendly volume. Crandall displays none of the academic pomposity that sometimes arises when scholars write tomes on applied economics.

On this note, Crandall’s first chapter

deserves special mention. All too often, books like this begin with a “road-map” chapter—a terse string of passive-voice summaries that has all the rhetorical charm of a bad high school lab report. In contrast, Crandall’s first chapter does what a first chapter should do: It sets out the context, explains why the subject is important, and develops the reader’s interest.

“The telephone equipment and services sector,” Crandall states, “has changed from a tranquil, regulated monopoly into a set of increasingly competitive markets in which domestic and foreign suppliers compete for the patronage of household and business users.” He then gets right on with telling the story of how this change occurred and what it means. I kept reading, not just because

this magazine paid me to write a book review, but because I wanted to find out how the story would end.

Of course, the regulation story is far from over. "Many people believe that telephone services have been deregulated, but in fact precious little deregulation has taken place," notes Crandall. "Local rates remain regulated. State commissions still regulate intrastate toll rates. The FCC regulates dominant carriers, such as AT&T." And "the divested Bell operating companies are the most constrained of all the players," prohibited from manufacturing telecommunications equipment, offering long-distance service, or providing information services.

Deregulation has largely occurred in the long-distance and equipment markets. In 1971, the Federal Communications Commission permitted competitors to challenge AT&T in the long-distance telephone market. Then in 1984, the AT&T breakup threw open a competitive market in telecommunications equipment, with anyone free to manufacture except the local Bell telephone companies.

These policy changes have been controversial. Opponents predicted that fragmenting the Bell System would raise costs, degrade quality, and jeopardize universal phone service. Supporters favored the consumer benefits of competition over the efficiencies of integration.

Six years after the AT&T breakup and 19 years after competition came to long-distance service, there is an ample historical record to put these theories to the test. Crandall's statistical research reveals that telecommunications productivity has accelerated, prices more accurately reflect costs, and there is no evidence that quality has deteriorated. He also finds a negligible effect on universal service, estimating that the number of low-income families with phone service is at most 2 percent or 3 percent lower than it otherwise would have been.

Unfortunately, many in the policy arena will probably interpret these results as an endorsement of the status quo, which features 50 state regulatory fiefdoms, a maze of FCC regulation, and a

national telecommunications czar named Harold Greene, whose court administers the Bell breakup agreement.

If Crandall's findings get used to justify this mess, it won't be his fault. His concluding chapter points out that even though we're better off than before, there's plenty of room for improvement: "As the telephone network fragments further, regulators will be forced to abandon the distorted rates that seem partially responsible for this fragmentation. Then it will become possible to get a market test of the magnitude of scale-scope economies versus the benefits of competition." It's refreshing to find someone in Washington humble enough to admit that he doesn't know the most efficient structure for the industry.

This volume will no doubt be heavily discussed in the ongoing congressional debate over allowing the Baby Bells to manufacture equipment, produce information services, and offer long-distance service. Opponents argue that the Bells can cross-subsidize these services with revenues from regulated local phone service. For example, a Bell company might install new high-tech equipment to provide information services but convince regulators that they need the equipment to provide ordinary local phone service. Households would then get charged for equipment they aren't using when they pay for basic phone service. Meanwhile, in the market for information services, the Bells would have a cost advantage over competitors who lack a base of captive customers to squeeze.

Proponents of freeing the Bells argue that the FCC can control cross-subsidization; therefore, it makes little sense to keep certain markets off-limits to companies controlling 60 percent of the nation's telecommunications assets.

If this book has a (slight) weakness, it's that the discussion of cross-subsidization assumes that the reader is already familiar with the issue. This poses a problem, because it isn't clear that many policy makers really understand what cross-subsidization is, or why the Bell companies might have a reason to engage in it. Such ignorance can have dire policy

consequences, because if one doesn't understand why the Bells might cross-subsidize, it's also hard to discern circumstances under which they would not cross-subsidize. Without such knowledge, one can never figure out how and when it might be appropriate to free the Bells.

Judge Greene's references to cross-subsidization in his court opinions, for example, often seem to say no more than "big companies can do whatever they want." Opponents of allowing the Bells to compete have picked up on this theme, seemingly unaware that the fundamental reason for cross-subsidization lies in the structure of regulation itself.

Local telephone companies are, by and large, subject to rate-of-return regulation by state regulatory commissions. Under some conditions, they may have an incentive to increase profits by increasing capital expenses; the more capital they use, the more profits regulators let them earn. And what better way to increase capital expenses than to enter new, competitive markets using facilities and equipment that they claim are being used in old, regulated markets?

Crandall points out that regulatory reform or further deregulation can take away the Bells' incentive to cross-subsidize. Eliminating rate-of-return regulation, he says, is the policy option "most attractive to traditional economists familiar with the literature on the distortions caused by rate-of-return regulation." I agree, but his observation would be more convincing if he devoted more space to explaining the economics of cross-subsidization.

Nevertheless, *After the Breakup* is one of the most lucid books I've read in a field awash in abstruse economese, legal lingo, bureau-babble, and techno-speak. Readers familiar with telecommunications will appreciate Crandall's new findings, and readers unfamiliar with telecommunications will better understand their phone bills.

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P.C. LEFT, P.C. RIGHT

BY THOMAS W. HAZLETT

A veritable Inquisition now reigns on the American college campus. The criminal proceedings begin with the accusation ("You called her a girl, you pig!"), and the Ministry of Information swings into action. This is often an official board, controlled by a lynch mob armed with bull horns. The defendant is not Mirandized, and the presumption is guilt by reason of insanity.

In a flash, a People's Tribunal is convened; no mucking about with due-process technicalities here. The charges are read aloud, and it's straight to the verdict: Guilty! Sexist! Racist! Homophobic Vermin! Then the inevitable sentence to a re-education seminar. There, the social deviant will confess to his sins. (Oops! I left out *her* sins! Guilty!) Self-criticism is the cleanser, public humiliation the rinse.

These kangaroo courts have caught the attention of our social-crime beat reporters. The major news organizations are onto the more bizarre aspects of the anti-intellectualism now available in sound-bite format, and they have shocked millions of unindicted American co-conspirators with actual trial testimony.

What is troubling me about the reaction to the McCarthyism of the left is...the McCarthyism of the right. While the P.C. craze has infected the campus with style-conscious zombies who believe that thinking is a boring substitute for the latest in ecologically chic buttonwear, right-wingers have slipped into the campus masquerade as phony civil libertarians. The clothes don't fit, and they're tripping all over those shoes.

Alas, there is no constituency for *truth*. I hate to bring it up, but the T-word was kind of the idea behind the university to begin with. While the corporation is a slave to profit, the government to politics, television to ratings, and the church to dogma, the scholar was set up in business to pursue unbridled factology. OK, it sounds a little goofy. But that was the plan: the university as an academic oasis

where neither the constraints of practicality, nor of popularity, nor of orthodoxy would prevail, thus allowing scope for intelligent reflection, calculated experiment, and rigorous debate. From this richly fertilized soil, useful discoveries might blossom.

But to the right, "free speech" becomes "communist agitation" the instant conservatives snag 50.1 percent of the Inquisition Board slots. The only time you'll see Jesse Helms in the same zip code with the Bill of Rights is at an NRA rally. Accuracy in Media's Reed Irvine, outraged over liberal media bias, prays for the Fairness Doctrine (abolished in 1987) to be born again, ready to vanquish those pinkos at CBS. Only minutes after George Bush railed against P.C.-ness at the University of Michigan, he was rushed to the hospital with an irregular heartbeat; could his sudden twist from a constitutional amendment to ban flag burning have induced the vapors?

The reflexes of the right are all against free inquiry, and the campus P.C. debate produced exactly the knee jerk the doctor expected. In authoring the Collegiate Speech Protection Act of 1991, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) seeks to ban speech codes at private colleges. Hyde is to conservative activists what Paula Abdul is to teenage boys with a glandular imbalance. But the idea of regulating universities that regulate speech—on the grounds that private schools cannot be trusted to regulate themselves—flips the Constitution on its head and spins it 180 degrees. Schools are supposed to set standards, not the federal government; how many billion decibels would these right-wingers scream (without the ACLU, which endorses Hyde's bill) if the federal government swooped in to strip private *high schools* of their ability to regulate language, dress, and behavior?

The problem is not that schools are setting standards, but that they are setting

such ridiculous ones. UCLA should be more open and tolerant than, say, the Glendale Galleria or LAX. "Offensive speech," contraband on some 200-plus colleges with codes, should be carefully steered right into the arena of Higher Learning, center court. That is exactly where it should compete, and where its audience should assemble. As the famous Marxian historian Eugene Genovese recently wrote: "Any professor who, subject to the restraints of common sense and common decency, does not seize every opportunity to offend the sensibilities of his students is insulting and cheating them, and is no college professor at all."

The campus as truth-seeking oasis is not the vision of right-wing ideologues. Their intellectual mothers rooted hard for Senator Joe, and their kissin' cousins yet spy on leftish professors, pressing their classroom evidence of subversion not for honest challenge but for political expulsion. Free speech is today their agenda, but it is not their cause.

Such disingenuousness is dry timber for the P.C. fires, as the battle is reduced to a raw power struggle trampling the scholarly canon. It is hence fortuitous that liberals are increasingly selected as defendants in P.C. prosecutions. While the attack seems motivated by practical considerations (limiting the hunt to right-wingers leaves loads of excess capacity in the P.C. holding cells), it has forced the issue. Now the university's liberals have both opportunity and motive...to be liberal. They should heed Genovese's call "for honorable men and women [to] defeat terrorism by unleashing counterterrorism against cowardly administrators and their complicit faculty."

It would be nice if they hurried. It is not quite yet midnight at the oasis.

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