

Book Reviews

After America: Get Ready for Armageddon, by Mark Steyn, hardcover, 424 pp, \$29.95, ISBN 978-1-59698-100-3, Washington, D.C., Regnery, 2011.

What to think of Mark Steyn is the inevitable question after reading this book. Are we on the brink of financial Armageddon, or is this just overblown hype by a man who cannot get over the fact that a socialist was elected President of the United States?

I have found that talking to people at social events about impending financial collapse gets one viewed as a conspiracy theorist who spends too much time on the Internet. I believe that this is a manifestation of the normalcy bias, under which people believe that their present reality will go on forever. The thought of mass starvation and fighting daily to stay alive is as alien to all Americans today as comfort would have been alien to our forefathers prior to the early 20th century.

Could we really be doomed? Can we look to the past and predict the outcome for our society? Will the collapse occur quickly, over an extended time, or will it not occur at all? Can an evolved, technically advanced society sink into many years of “dark ages”? Can civil society collapse into depravity?

Edward Gibbon called the first and second centuries A.D. in the Roman Empire the happiest time in human history. The Western Roman Empire began to crumble around 300 A.D., but did not completely fail until 476 A.D. Europe would not return to the standard of living it enjoyed during the Roman Empire for another 1,000 years. It would be fair to say that human nature has not changed. Still, can we predict an outcome for our society, which Steyn calls “the New Rome”? Steyn attempts to do so.

The true reason for our American decline, Steyn writes, is the structural problem of too much productive time being wasted complying with our excessively obese regulatory state. The

idea from chapter one that we need a “Not Sitting Around on My Ass All Day” permit to do anything sums up his point. It seems that sex is about the only thing for which you do not need a license.

Steyn believes we do not have a fiscal crisis in America so much as we have a moral crisis. It is immoral to spend money not yet earned by generations not yet born. He also believes that American statists (socialists) live in a world of ignorance. They do not recognize that Europe does not function well and has been in a slow decline over the past 66 years. They do not recognize that Europe functions at all only because America has been there to cushion its fall since 1945. If America collapses, the fall will be swift and severe. The portents are not good. Steyn believes that the Western world has given up on the future. We do not save, we do not produce, and we do not reproduce. Europe’s population is slated to decline, and if not for immigrant births, America would be failing to reproduce itself as well.

I can’t say whether I did or did not enjoy reading the book. Steyn’s gallows humor keeps the reader smirking rather than enjoying the avalanche of information about apathy and blatant lunacy. For example, he writes that after hurricane *Katrina*, firemen from all over the country who volunteered to help and who were urgently need for assistance in Louisiana were first shunted to Atlanta for diversity and sexual-harassment training.

He muses as to whether it is only a matter of time before some nutty judge finds the Constitution unconstitutional. He lays out the corruption of luminaries such as Rep. John Conyers (why read a bill I cannot understand anyway?) and Nancy Pelosi (we have to pass the bill to find out what’s in it).

Steyn writes that we are governed by unelected bureaucrats, not Congress. He gives numerous descriptions of stupidity such as “Greek tax collectors, to protest government cuts, stopped collecting taxes,” and “lesbian women in Sweden are being

stymied in their desire for children by a shortage of functional sperm.” He shows how socialism promotes apathy and hedonism and mentions that Britain has signs up that plead with citizens not to beat up public employees. Even Cicero in 55 B.C. knew that free benefits from the government would undermine people’s will to work, and drain the treasury. Have we forgotten that? Steyn shows America has become a land that rewards failure at the personal, corporate, and state levels. After all, we are the first society in the history of the world where obesity is a symptom of poverty.

As an example of political correctness run amok, Steyn notes that the American Academy of Pediatrics decries circumcision, yet said we should support female genital mutilation out of cultural respect. His examples are so profuse that one would become breathless trying to recount them all.

I did at times have a hard time discerning themes in the chapters. It seemed that each chapter was another blast from the same shotgun. Just more and more stories designed to make me want to scream out at the senseless wasteland that is our country today. I did disagree with Steyn on just a few points: He wants America to be the world’s policeman, and I think this is a waste of human and economic capital.

Steyn spends 324 pages describing a hopelessly depressing situation, then 25 pages on how to fix the problem. The first 324 pages are far more persuasive than the final 25. It is apparent from the first 90 percent of the book that accomplishing the last 10 percent is likely to be impossible, and would be a change from every relevant historical circumstance of similar magnitude and severity.

Ayn Rand’s John Galt gave up and left society to crumble, but only as an instinct of self-preservation. Do we need to move away to protect ourselves from being slaves to those who live only at the whim of government handouts? It is hard not to be pessimistic: as Steyn shows, the moral

fiber of the nation is in complete disarray, and there is a fine line between civilization and the abyss. Therefore, it is hard for me to imagine the nation correcting itself without a massive trauma, such as complete collapse of the currency.

Were this to happen, there would soon be no food, no medicine, and little water. Would the urban mortality be 5 percent? 40 percent? If such a horrendous scenario played out, the nation might turn to Steyn's prescription: De-centralize, de-governmentalize, de-regulate, de-monopolize, de-complicate, de-credentialize, dis-entitle, de-normalize—and *DO*.

"We must return to liberty and limited government or we will join the rest of the western world in terminal decline," Steyn concludes.

"Civilization is not an evolution of mankind, but the imposition of human good on human evil."

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Medicrats: Medical Bureaucrats That Rule Your Health Care, by Ralph Weber and Dave Racer, softcover, 149 pp, ISBN: 978-09777534-9-9, \$14.95, St. Paul, Minn., Alethos Press, 2011.

Ralph Weber and Dave Racer have offered a concise summary of the benefits of a free market in medicine, and the harm done when the free market is distorted by government regulation and price controls.

"Medicrat" is a term the authors use to describe entrenched government and insurance bureaucrats who rule over our medical care. These unseen and often inaccessible bureaucrats make coverage decisions, set prices, and regulate nearly every aspect of modern medical practice.

The public seldom recognizes how much damage medicrats do. The authors point out that price controls have led to cost-shifting, whereby the uninsured, self-insured, and those who have high-deductible health plans often get charged some multiple of fees paid by those under Medicare or who have HMO coverage. Noting that coverage is not the same as access to care, the authors point out that price controls have often led to rationing of care by limiting access to it.

The authors also point out the inflationary effect government mandates have on insurance premiums. Although

the public was assured that health insurance premiums would decrease under "ObamaCare," the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has had the opposite effect. The authors explain how the fixed medical loss ratio (that percentage of the premium that actually goes to pay for medical care, as opposed to administrative and marketing expense) dictated by "ObamaCare" will predictably increase medical premiums:

If the average health plan premium is \$500 per month, then the MLR [medical loss ratio] allows 20 percent (\$100) for overhead. If an insurance company takes steps to reduce [the] premium by increasing co-pays and deductibles, by cutting mandates, and by reducing reimbursement rates, and the premium fell to \$250, it would only leave them with \$50 for overhead. This, of course, makes no sense. The overhead costs do not go down; they either remain constant or increase. Actually, the MLR provides an incentive for insurance companies to increase premiums, thereby also increasing their 20 percent overhead share.

The authors also provide a brief historical perspective of the third-party payment system of pre-paid medical care that we have today. In a section titled "Birth of the Blues," the authors review how Blue Cross and Blue Shield were formed to ensure that hospitals and physicians would receive payment for services. With the lure of guaranteed money, however, comes loss of control by patients and their physicians over care they are eligible to receive.

The authors advocate a return to true insurance, as opposed to the pre-paid type of medical care most have today. True insurance was never meant to cover the small expenses of routine office visits. Unlike catastrophic medical insurance or life insurance, with pre-paid care, people have an expectation of using their insurance coverage, and of getting their money's worth. Thus, pre-paid healthcare has been a major factor in dramatically increasing medical premiums.

Like other free-market supporters, the authors believe that competition, even across state lines, is key to patients receiving better value at lower prices. Prices need to be transparent, predictable, and negotiable for patients.

Although the information presented in this small paperback may not be new for readers of this journal, it does offer a basic primer on the benefits of free-market medicine that many previously have not thought about at all.

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Ameritopia: the Unmaking of America, by Mark R. Levin, hardcover, 270 pp, \$16.01, ISBN 978-1-4391-7324-4, New York, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 2012.

This book, by an attorney, former Reagan Administration official, and now radio talk show host and founder of Landmark Legal Foundation, is a serious effort to elucidate the political problems that have developed in this country in the past 100 years, from Teddy Roosevelt to Barack Obama.

Levin previously authored *Men in Black: How the Supreme Court Is Destroying America* (2005) and *Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto* (2009) on the outrages of the courts and the problems of leftist politics. *Ameritopia: The Unmaking of America* is his most erudite and engaging book, in which Levin puts down the polemical pen to review the history and philosophical underpinning of American republican representative government and to inquire why it is at odds with the socialist movement that has invaded society in all sectors—academic, political, and cultural.

Levin condemns the New Age "living Constitution" approach of liberal judges and politicians, and he instinctively rejects socialism and the modernist form of fascist or socialist tyranny advocated by statist, which could destroy America as the bastion of individual liberty. He always comes back to the group of political geniuses and practical politicians who conceived, framed, and created the greatest government experiment in human history. Starting with those sacred and honored concepts of the American founding, *Ameritopia* also tries to educate the reader about how and why we have lost our way.

The new "hope and change" statist is just warmed-over ancient utopians, Levin states. He shows how old and new utopian concepts and campaigns are flawed. He plows the ground of philosophy and

political thought to help the reader understand how respected and revered philosophers planted the seeds of liberty-killing utopian tyranny of ideals and mystic political dreams.

The first five chapters of *Ameritopia* are devoted to utopian political thought, using Plato, Thomas More, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx as exemplars. Chapters six through 10 discuss the origins of the concepts of individual liberty and limited government, including John Locke's ideas on natural law and how it protects the individual from the state, which are incorporated in the Declaration of Independence. Charles de Montesquieu focused on balancing and dividing the sources of power in the government so that the citizen could be assured of liberty and a limited government. Montesquieu provided the plan for a structure of federalism and separation and balance of enumerated powers that is the unique American experiment in governance.

In the section on the American Founders, Levin describes how Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Mason, and others founded a limited government based on the consent of the governed, respectful of individual liberty and freedom. Their ideas were derived from those of Montesquieu and Locke. The government was to have only designated and specified limited powers, with those not enumerated being reserved to the people and to the states.

Throughout the book Levin discusses how limited government is jeopardized by the ambitions and overreach of modern utopianism, and how, with the best of intentions, "progressive" statist incrementally expand the powers and influence of government in a soft tyranny of welfare and administrative programs—the end being oppression and loss of liberty.

Most of all, Levin warns us of the terrible consequences of allowing elites (he uses the term "masterminds") to presume to be capable of creating utopia. Citizens are allowed to vote for leaders, but between elections, governance is by the soft tyranny of the administrative state. Allowing those Plato called "philosopher kings" to gain control is to become their subjects. Levin remarks that the electorate is considered qualified to choose its leadership, but not its light bulbs, vehicles, health insurance, or toilets.

Section III exposes the results of ambitious statist expansion, with special emphasis on Woodrow Wilson, who attempted to devalue the founding documents and declared them inadequate. Wilson's ideas were expanded in the domineering nanny state created by Franklin Roosevelt and his "Brain Trust." After the New Deal, the die was cast for an administrative welfare state—even supposedly conservative administrations and governments subsequently pushed this with few pauses or retreats. Nixon and others advanced new agencies and government programs. There were some real pauses during the Reagan years, but little was done to restore the original concept of limited government.

Levin concludes that the American experiment was a great success, but warns that we are on the brink of terrible failure if we accept utopian ideas and destroy functional representative government with its limited and enumerated powers. He is deeply concerned that we may be in the process of giving up liberty for the security of an administrative welfare state tyranny imposed by an oligarchy of elitist ideologues.

Levin has achieved his goal of a concise and insightful history of political ideas, with a mind to what those ideas mean to modern Americans, and he did it without showboating and in fewer than 300 pages.

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Demonic: How the Liberal Mob Is Endangering America, by Ann Coulter, hardback, 340 pp. \$28.99, ISBN 978-0-307-35348-1, New York, N.Y., Crown Forum, 2011.

"America has always had people capable of behaving horribly. We call them 'Democrats.'"

"Ironically, having your finger bitten off by a left-wing crackpot while protesting ObamaCare is not covered by ObamaCare, but erectile dysfunction therapy for federal inmates is."

"Not every liberal will commit political violence, but all political violence keeps being committed by liberals."

—Ann Coulter

A delightful way for today's citizen to learn the reasons for recurring widespread

poverty, suffering, and death caused by irrational liberal policies over the past century is to read Ann Coulter's insightful take on liberal history in her entertaining latest bestseller, *Demonic*.

As she points out, the classic 1896 book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* by the French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon, brilliantly describes the characteristics of mob behavior, including large-scale popular delusions. She says the book is relevant today since it describes the traits of modern liberals and identifies the "root cause" of their behavior. According to Le Bon, crowds are only as clever as the dullest person within them; if a simple message is repeated over and over again, the demagogue can create a contagion that allows unstoppable ideas and emotions to infect an entire culture. It takes a brave citizen indeed to oppose the contagion.

Coulter says liberals don't want us to know an important part of liberalism's history—that its policies are the same as those of the French Revolution, and that that revolution remains an inspiration for today's liberals. She asserts that the liberal mob's revolutionary document is France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. The French declaration addressed one's natural rights as an individual, and one's duties to the government. It led to the disastrous French Revolution, with its Reign of Terror; its slogan, "Be my brother or I'll kill you"; and its symbol, the "national razor"—the guillotine.

Coulter describes in fascinating detail the horrors of that event. Six hundred thousand French citizens were killed, and another 145,000 fled the country. In the seeming blink of an eye, a great civilization was reduced to rubble, and its most valuable citizens were killed or living elsewhere. The greatest nation in continental Europe soon became a human abattoir.

The revolution would later be imitated in Germany, Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and even—with less success so far, Coulter says—by our own Democratic Party. Psychopaths from Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, to Kim Il Sung, Pol Pot, and Castro used the rabble to grab power, with the same bloody results experienced by the French. Coulter points out that during the Russian Revolution the *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty won a Pulitzer Prize for calling Stalin's forced starvation of an estimated 15 million Ukrainians a false rumor.

As she notes, the history of liberalism consists of replacing things that work with things that sounded good on paper. Liberals use the power of the state to revoke nature, the market, and popular opinion—all of which they disdain. They promise utopia; the only thing they need is sufficient willpower, and they think heaven will be found on earth. They “nationalize everything: healthcare, welfare, the speed limit, abortion, the drinking age,....” Their view of politics is one hate machine against the other.

Coulter defines a liberal as a person who: claims to be pro-children, but supports the public schools; champions women’s and gay rights, but ignores the brutal treatment of women and gays by Muslims; yelps for clean, alternative energy, but violently opposes nuclear power; believes that Tea Partiers are terrorists, but jihadists are victims.

Like the mob described in Le Bon’s book, the liberal is irrational, impulsive, child-like, hysterical, unreasonable, clueless, unable to follow logical arguments, and often violent, Coulter writes. Liberals are perfectly capable of holding two completely contradictory ideas in their heads at the same time.

For example, only the liberals (Democrats), she says, could oppose Clarence Thomas, actually block Supreme Court nominee Douglas Ginsburg (for marijuana use), and then run Bill Clinton for president. Only liberals could love George Soros (convicted of felony insider trading in France), Bill Gates, and Warren Buffett, while claiming to detest Wall Street and “the rich.” And only the liberal mob has professors, *New York Times* columnists, former presidents, and members of Congress willing to promote their delusions.

Coulter says liberals prefer images to logic. They thrive on jargon as a substitute for thought. They can’t have normal conversations with their friends because they don’t have normal friends. By using slogans such as “working families,” “economic justice,” and “unbridled corporate greed,” they never have to talk about the actual issues being considered. Though they are all for revolution and “change,” they are scared by the mention of nuclear power plants, genetically modified foods, food irradiation, and guns with plastic frames.

Being completely uninformed is precisely how most liberals stay liberal, Coulter tells us. They simply cannot learn. They’re like children who put their hands over their ears because they don’t want to listen to Mother. Most normal people just give up and let liberals enjoy their fantasies.

Coulter writes equally well about other topics, such as conspiracy theories and the history of the civil rights movement. What she does not address is the other side of our political situation—the largely unrecognized, dark history of the conservatives and Republicans. Their history may be less “demonic” than that of the Democrats, but the Republican record just under President George W. Bush, for example, might argue otherwise.

Bush’s massive expansion of the welfare state, the disastrous No Child Left Behind Act, the USA PATRIOT Act with its domestic surveillance, his global war on terror, his creation of the hated Transportation Security Administration, his justification of the use of torture for interrogation, and the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act would give Coulter plenty of material to critique. This Coulter history might be titled, “Demonic: Conservatives and Americans’ Lost Rights and Liberties.” It likely would be another in her long string of best sellers.

Demonic gives conservatives and other normal Americans needed insight into one of America’s most serious problems. It should be read by all Americans.

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The Harvard Psychedelic Club, by Don Lattin, softcover, 256 pp, \$14.99, ISBN 978-0-06-165594-4, New York, N.Y., HarperCollins, 2010.

The best-known members of the “Club” were Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert (Ram Das), Huston Smith, and Andrew Weil. This book details their excursions into mind-altering experiments at Harvard University in the 1960s.

While there were many young people who experimented with hallucinogenic drugs in the 1960s, how does one explain full professors enticing young people into mind-altering drug experiments in the name of science—at what was arguably America’s most prestigious institution of higher learning?

Yes, this is the same Harvard University that thrust upon us the RBRVS (Resource-Based Relative Value Scale), the system by which the U.S. government exercises price controls on physicians and hospitals. According to some critics, Harvard surveyed an insufficient number of cases to warrant making the faulty conclusions of RBRVS, and some findings were devoid of any empiric foundation. In my opinion, there is *never* any constitutional authority for the federal government to institute price controls.

Despite its flaws, Harvard was successful in selling its unscientific system to the federal government. This was a quarter of a century later, and we wouldn’t expect hallucinogenic drugs to have transgenerational, system-wide effects. Is there something about the culture at Harvard that promotes irrationality?

Laced throughout the book are references to spirituality, meditation, the divine quest, mysticism, etc., intertwined with sacred mushrooms, peyote, mescaline, psilocybin, and LSD. Add commune experiments and aberrant sexual behavior to this, and you’ve got one dysfunctional quagmire.

As Lattin describes it, Richard Alpert, following his Harvard psychedelic experiences, journeyed to India, where he encountered Guru Neem Karoli Baba, called “Maharaji.” This guru told Alpert that “LSD could be useful, but it was not true *samadhi*, that highest state of yogic concentration that the *Bhagavad Gita* describes as ‘seeing the self as abiding in all things and all things in the self.’”

Upon his return to the U.S., Alpert paraded around barefoot in his long white robe and lengthy beard. The transformation even included his name, which was changed from Richard Alpert to Ram Das. This was, however, the same man who a few years earlier had lived in San Francisco and Boston, jet-setting between the two coasts. He lived simultaneously with a male lover in San Francisco and a female partner in Boston, neither of whom was aware of the “other lover.” During the same period, he was also spending a lot of time acting as a surrogate mother to Timothy Leary’s two younger children, Susan and Jack. Susan committed suicide in 1990, and Jack became estranged from his

father for a prolonged period. In the 1980s, while working with AIDS patients, Alpert (Das), a psychology researcher, finally confessed: "I was confused."

At 35, Timothy Leary, who was also a research psychologist, lost his wife Marianne to suicide. They had an open marriage, and the mutual infidelities were apparently too much for her. Dr. Leary, four wives later, pinned the blame on another mind-altering drug—alcohol.

Timothy Leary was the architect of the Harvard Psilocybin Project, which recruited graduate students from seminaries, colleges, and universities for controlled "trips" via ingestion of psilocybin, the active ingredient in "magic mushrooms." Leary had partaken of the mushrooms through a Mexican shaman, and this brought him "the deepest religious experience" of his life.

Huston Smith's journey from China (he was the son of Methodist missionary parents) to become a professor of philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology led him into the study of world religions. Indeed, his book *The Religions of Man*, republished as *The World Religions*, was a best-seller.

Smith, in his mystical search, sought out Aldous Huxley, who lived at the ruins of a failed utopian communal society in California—Llano del Rio. It should be noted that Alpert and Leary established their own commune in Newton, Mass., holding all in common—property, drugs, and each other. After that failure, a similar communal experiment was attempted in Millbrook, New York, thanks to the largesse of a wealthy heir. The Millbrook commune likewise could not endure the drugs, aberrant sexuality, and total commonality.

Huxley had experimented with mescaline, describing his psychedelic experiences in *The Doors of Perception*. Years later, Huston Smith published his own *Cleansing the Doors of Perception*. Smith and Huxley hit it off, both being interested in the mystical experiences of yoga and Buddhism, as well as those triggered by drugs.

When Huston Smith and Timothy Leary hooked up at Harvard, their interest in psychedelic trips led them to "legitimize" their interest as a research project.

Andrew Weil was not part of the Harvard Psilocybin Project, but as a

student reporter for the Harvard *Crimson* turned out to be the one to expose it. This earned him the animosity of Leary, Alpert, and Smith. Like the others, however, Weil was very fascinated by mysticism and ethnobotany. He went on to Harvard Medical School, after which he drifted to Central and South America to study with native shamans and sorcerers, who taught him about drugs, plants, and techniques to achieve altered states of consciousness. Dr. Weil was interested in the source of healing power, and the "interconnectedness of magic, religion, and medicine." As the others sought out Eastern mystics, Dr. Weil looked to indigenous curanderos.

Dr. Weil has written many books, attempting to bridge the gap between scientific medicine and holistic medicine, yoga, acupuncture, meditation, and other "relaxation techniques." He prefers being called "The Wizard," and seems to have found his own blend of magic, medicine, and religion, discarding scientific medicine and RBRVS.

Indeed, Harvard, that great center of higher learning, has delivered two formidable blows to Western medicine—"magic mushrooms" and RBRVS.

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The New Road to Serfdom: a Letter of Warning to America, by Daniel Hannan, hardcover, 198 pp, \$24.99, ISBN 978-0-06-195693-5, New York, N.Y., HarperCollins, 2010.

This book is a plea by a British member of the European parliament to Americans not to follow the European path. Although he loves his own country, Hannan writes, "American self-belief is like a force of nature, awesome and inexorable. It turned a dream of liberty into a functioning nation."

Hannan has a better concept of American history and the American form of government than many Americans do. He clearly understands the meaning of American exceptionalism and its importance for the welfare of the rest of the world.

Many Americans think it doesn't make any difference how they vote. In Europe, this is even truer. There is little that European politicians can change. There has been a comprehensive shift in power in the

European Union from elected representatives to permanent functionaries, from national parliaments to Eurocrats, from the citizens to the state.

Hannan states that Britain is now largely administered by Quangos: Quasi-autonomous, non-governmental organizations. Quoting F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, he writes: "The delegation of particular technical tasks to separate bodies, while a regular feature, is yet the first step by which a democracy progressively relinquishes its powers."

An extremely important feature of America is open primary elections, Hannan writes. As long as these exist, a politician cannot afford to forget his electorate. Without an open primary, a government with a majority in the legislature can rule almost without constraint. Hannan draws a striking contrast between the U.S. Constitution, which is 7,200 words long, and the EU constitution, now formally known as the Lisbon Treaty, which is 76,000 words. The U.S. Constitution concerns itself with broad principles, such as the balance between state and federal authorities, whereas the EU constitution is concerned with all kinds of details. The U.S. Constitution is mainly about liberty of the individual, while the EU constitution is mainly about the power of the state.

American "progressives" almost always speak of "fragmentation" in a pejorative sense. But Hannan emphasizes the dangers of centralizing power. He refers to the 1981 book *The European Miracle* by Australian historian E.L. Jones to explain that Europe's success resided in the fact that it never became a unified state. Whereas Oriental empires became centralized, bureaucratized, and heavily taxed, Europe's princedoms were constantly competing with each other. Many European advances, he notes, were driven by the phenomenon of the refugee. "As long as there was somewhere to flee to, the power of the autocrat was checked. As long as there were competing states, no dictatorship would be secure." The concept of economies of scale doesn't necessarily apply. Hannan points out the inverse correlation between size and prosperity. The wealthiest people in the world tend to live in very small states.

One of my favorite features of the book is the commentary on the New Deal and “the most dangerous of political fallacies: The idea that, at a time of crisis, the government’s response must be proportionate to the degree of public anxiety.” Politicians intone, “Doing nothing is not an option!” Hannan asks whether that phrase is ever true. Hyperactivity is itself no solution. “Doing nothing is always an option, and often it is the best option.” Don’t copy Europe, Hannan says. Don’t Europeanize healthcare, don’t Europeanize welfare, don’t Europeanize society, and don’t Europeanize immigration.

In particular, Hannan warns the U.S. against imitating the mistakes of Britain: expanding government, regulating private commerce, centralizing jurisdiction, breaking the link between taxation and representation, and abandoning its sovereignty. He urges America to “honor the genius of your founders. Respect the most sublime constitution devised by human intelligence. Keep faith with the design that has made you independent. Preserve the freedom of the nation to which, by good fortune and God’s grace, you are privileged to belong.”

About Britain’s National Health Service, Hannan states that Britain is about the last place in the industrialized world where you’d want to be diagnosed with cancer, stroke, or heart disease. Any criticism of the system is considered to be “insulting our hardworking doctors and nurses.” This is true even though the employees of NHS stand to gain more than anyone else from ending a system that allows the state to ruthlessly exploit its position as a monopoly employer.

When politicians assume responsibility for healthcare, he notes, the course is almost irreversible, and opens taxpayers to unlimited liabilities. It is almost impossible to suggest any reform. While newspapers may frequently carry horror stories about what happens in hospitals, no one is allowed to suggest a connection between the outcomes and the system that produced them.

Hannan points to Singapore as the best example to follow. There, healthcare accounts for only 3.5 percent of GDP. Singaporeans are obliged to pay a

percentage of their earnings into a dedicated account, a small component of which pays for catastrophic insurance. The insurance companies have a much-reduced role, as most everyday needs are paid for out of the health savings account. Thus, physicians and medical facilities are encouraged to offer their services as cheaply as possible, and consumers find that thrift is rewarded.

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Power Grab: How Obama's Green Policies Will Steal Your Freedom and Bankrupt America, by Christopher C. Horner, hardcover, 396pp, \$27.95, ISBN 978-1-599-5, Washington, D.C., Regnery, 2010.

The book is well summarized in its subtitle. The conclusion elaborates a bit further, stating that with the leftist environmentalist agenda, “the issue really isn’t the issue. This is not about the climate, it is not about jobs, and it is not about national security.”

The issue is to transfer power, wealth, and decision-making from individual producers and consumers to big government and its retainers, including environmental activist groups, purportedly to save us from the latest apocalyptic threat. There are about 100 notes on about 80 pages documenting numerous examples.

Horner exposes the radical background of some of the players. Climate czarina Carol Browner, who appears at the President’s side for all manner of critical announcements, was appointed as a senior adviser, thereby circumventing the normal process of Senate confirmation. A Senate probe might reveal that Browner is a commissioner for a project of Socialist International, and that while a business partner of Madeleine Albright, she went to Russia to say that she didn’t want the United States to be the leading state in the world any longer. During her tenure as head of the Environmental Protection Agency under Clinton, she ordered her computer files to be deleted just after a federal court enjoined her to preserve them.

The Administration’s war on energy, especially the war on natural gas, is also a

war on agriculture, Horner says. As the cost of natural gas goes up, so does the cost of fertilizer, and therefore food. He states, “Agriculture has long been a target of the Greens, who will never forgive us for managing to feed all of those people...the enviros insisted would starve if they, horror of horrors, managed to be born.”

The Green agenda stands for money, Horner states, providing many examples. Obama’s former chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, helped to create Exelon, which is “the president’s utility,” according to Exelon’s chief lobbyist. Exelon would reap about \$1 billion per year in windfall profits under a carbon trading scheme, but its fortunes are not too bright without a carbon price of some sort.

Horner’s quotations from supposed capitalists who are collaborating in schemes to destroy capitalism remind me of rationalizations from the AMA: “It’s inevitable”; “you can’t just say ‘no’”; or “you’ve got to be at the table or you’re on the menu.” As Horner observes, such useful idiots naively seek to employ government defensively against something worse.

Passing any part of the Green agenda is dangerous, Horner warns. Regulatory regimes are vastly simpler to create than to dismantle. Thus the rent seekers intent on a “cap and trade” scheme are willing to compromise on adopting anything just to get the scheme in place. He points out identical language buried in both House and Senate versions of “cap and trade” bills, “ensuring that *all laws* on the books shall now be construed as ‘global warming’ regimes and *shall* be employed to that end” [emphasis in original].

One of Horner’s subheadings is, “How many unionized slacker federal bureaucrats does it take to change a light bulb?” This is really not a funny joke, as he quotes Obama himself promising to “hire young people who don’t have a trade and give them a trade...changing light bulbs...”

If you have hopes that the threats of the United States becoming a Third World tyranny are overblown, Horner’s book will probably dash them. His main hope is that Americans may wake up soon enough.

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