

FAIRFIELD PREP

December 2010, Volume 11 Issue 2

ZEITGEIST

"THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES"



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A Brief Word:

Before you begin this issue of Zeitgeist, I'd like you to consider the current world in which we live. A world that, regardless of political ideologies or positions on certain issues, we share as part of the human race. As you read the pieces that follow, think about the effect that these decisions have on your life, and what you think about them. Only through debate and discussion can we truly build a better world for ourselves and our descendents. Thank you for choosing to read the Zeitgeist, and we hope you have an enjoyable Christmas Break.

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"You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

The Rise of Slacktivism

By Dan Welch Class of 2012

Revolution is not something fixed in ideology, nor is it something fashioned to a particular decade. It is a perpetual process embedded in the human spirit.

-Abbie Hoffman



In response to a flight cancellation this past January, Paul Chambers of Doncaster, England joked on Twitter: “Crap! Robin Hood airport is closed. You've got a week and a bit to get your ... together otherwise I'm blowing the airport sky high!” When an employee of the aforementioned airport happened upon this comment, they reported Chambers, resulting in his arrest. Now, he's been fired from his job, fined £1,000, and has a criminal record. These events highlight a very important modern issue, which is how we value our words.

Within the past century, there have been such astronomical advancements in the ways we communicate that it seems that we need for almost every other aspect of our lives to catch up. As Mr. Chambers' case shows, this is especially true in our current system of law enforcement. The essential problem is the fact that Chambers could very well have been a real threat. In an age where bomb-making instructions and Jihadist websites can easily be found online, it wouldn't be entirely surprising for a terrorist to post an ultimatum on Twitter. Do these liberties need to be taken away? No, but what does need to change is how we approach them.

After hearing of Chambers' conviction, many Twitter users following the trial began to repost the tweet that Chambers was originally arrested for with the tag “#IamSpartacus”. This is a reference to a scene in the 1960 film “Spartacus” in which slaves respond to Roman inquiries as to the whereabouts of their leader by claiming to be him. As a result, the soldiers are forced to execute hundreds just to kill the one man they were searching for. In a similar spirit, the Twitter posters are (ideally) trying to prove a point about the inefficiency of law enforcement in the Information Age. Obviously, they cannot all be arrested, and even if they were there would be little ground for conviction, seeing as the original case has been widely publicized. Their point, it seems, is that it is a matter of context. The same sequence of words can be punishable by law or harmless upon two different readings. The context of Mr. Chambers' statement, if one were to read the posts previous the one in question, would clearly be that he is a very sarcastic, facetious man, and that he really meant no harm.

However, this group of posters seems to be lost in the innate “coolness” of the cause. Many have rephrased Chambers' words to make them a bit more humorous; threatening to blow up other establishments for more ridiculous reasons. The thing is, if you're going to be an activist, it shouldn't be this easy. You need to be out in the streets, protesting, educating yourself and others. You can't just treat it as a fashion statement. It isn't a snarky accessory you can add to whatever social networking sites you use. That's too safe. It doesn't accomplish anything.

We live in a world that holds the rich, famous, and beautiful in higher regard than the average man. As a result, it becomes too easy to forget how powerful we are. We limit ourselves to snippy comments like this because we don't think we can do any better. It's easier than marching in the streets, being sprayed by firehoses all along the way. We can do it from the comfort of our own homes without fear of the abuse, or even death. Now, this particular case may not be worth such measures, but this faux activism really is a problem, and we need to realize that until we are willing to risk life and limb for a cause, it will never get off the ground.

Education Examined

By Miles Steinert Class of 2012

Economic growth and the spread of democracy has raised the value of education and increased the importance of ensuring that all children and adults have access to high quality and effective education.

Before government-funded public schools, the primary mode of education for lower classes was charity school, which was used primarily by religious communities. These charity programs taught mostly grammar and book keeping, which gave students the skills to start basic businesses and continue their education by themselves out of books.

The ultimate development of the grammar school was by Joseph Lancaster and Adam Bell who developed the monitorial system. The monitorial system uses slightly more-advanced students to teach less-advanced students. This new system created smaller student to teacher ratios and enabled the education of many more people. Lancaster promoted his system in a piece called *Improvements in Education* that spread widely throughout the English-speaking world. He created an independent economic system that only existed in monitorial schools. Scrip, a form of currency only valuable in the schools, was created at a fixed exchange rate from a student's tuition. Every job of the school was bid-for by students in scrip. The jobs permitted students to collect scrip from other students for services rendered. With a fully developed internal economy, Lancaster schools provided a grammar-school education for a cost per student estimated as cheap as \$40 per year in 1999 U.S. dollars. Students figured out how to lower costs for themselves, engaging in group-work and organizing themselves into effective tutor and student give and take relationships.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, often called the father of child-studies, came up with new theories of education. He said that the educational process should utilize the natural potential of the child and its curiosity. He thought that children would learn better if taught through real world situations and experiences rather than pure intellectual study. This wasn't found in organized schools for a long time, but we see this starting to be implemented into our curriculums, even if only slightly.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Amos Bronson Alcott all had a major role in the "Transcendentalist" movement in the 1830s and 40s. They argued that the values of the individual should be cherished instead of values in written doctrine or of extremely organized institutions (at this point, Harvard). Sadly, this movement proved too difficult to grow into a worldwide reform because each individual learns at a different rate so in order to concentrate on every individual you will need mass funding and large amounts of resources.

We move on in history to John Dewey, a philosopher and educator who was influential especially during the first four decades of the 20th century. He pushed for hands on learning because he saw that if you could stimulate more of a student's senses while teaching, the information seems more alive and



*I like a teacher who gives
you something to take
home to think about
besides homework.*

-- Edith Ann



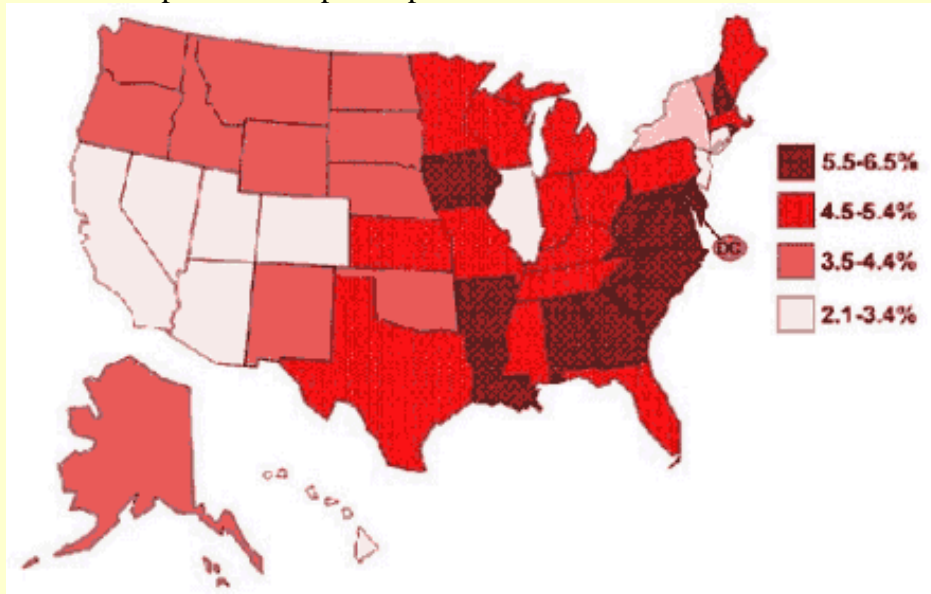
therefore the student absorbs it. His reforms and his effect on “laboratory schools” largely changed how the sciences are taught in modern schools. Administrative progressives, largely influenced by the industrial revolution and the concept economies of scale, are responsible for many features of modern American education. They affected how modern American high schools are run: counseling programs, the move from many small local high schools to large centralized high schools, standardization, and an increase in state and federal regulation and bureaucracy. When you standardize any process you lose much of the individual focus and the mass is much more analyzed than each student. This leads to a less comprehensive learning environment for each student. As the formal education process evolves we start to see a clash between the most successful mass standardized education and the attempt to represent each individual.

In the modern United States people talk about how US public schools are underfunded, but there aren't very many countries that spend as much on education as we do. Still, many say that because the U.S. spends over hundreds of billions of dollars more on defense than on education that our government does not have its spending priorities in order (the U.S. makes up 46% of the whole world's military spending). The discussion seems to stop here, what is not talked about very often is the question, Does spending more on education effect test scores positively? The answer is no, throwing money at the problem does not solve it.

Right now every country in the world is reforming education with two goals, how have children take a place in the economy when they are adults and to preserve cultural identity in our growing global society. But the problem is that we are using old techniques, and at the same time they are alienating millions of kids who don't see any point in going to school. Generations before mine were taught this story line: you work hard in school, you get to a good college, you get a good job and you then have a good life. A lot of kids don't believe that this strategy will work, instead thinking that you are better off having a college degree than not but it's not going to guarantee a successful life. So we need to adapt our education system to these modern circumstances because our school techniques largely stopped evolving before the 1900s. We live in an intensely stimulating environment, we are being blasted by information from all sides, from computers, iPhones, TV's etc. and our schooling systems still use the same standardized type of learning established in the 1800s. Entertaining things are distracting kids in school, when children have the ability to play on their phones why would they want to memorize Latin nouns! Instead of changing the learning environment, what do the adults in charge do? They medicate kids, even really little kids. (many of my friends were prescribed really

dangerous drugs when they were in the 2nd and 3rd grade)

Here is a map of ADHD prescriptions:



This is treated as an epidemic, but in reality cases rise based on prescription not because kids can't concentrate on the East coast and can on the West.

You shouldn't medicate children and calm them down in order to educate them, you should wake them up. Education has become about conformity and standardization because we saw it working in the 1800s and so we stop changing. We educate kids in batches of children all the same age, each student doing practically the same types of work. Why? Why is age so important? Why does every child take the same types of courses? And why do they take them nearly at the same age? People are different so why are we educated like we are the same?

There are various types of intelligence, one that has to do with creatively solving problems in divergent thinking. Divergent thinking (or creative intelligence) is the ability to see more than one answer to a problem, like finding many uses for an item or deciding what item a shape could be. If you score above 95% on a divergent thinking test you can be classified as a genius. A study in divergent thinking showed that 98% kindergarteners kids scored at that level. The same kids tested when they were 10 years old and only 15% scored at genius level and the stats continued to decline as they got older. So what does this prove? It proves that we all have this ability and as we go through the education process this ability declines. They have spent years and years being told, don't work together on most assignments (dubbed cheating in school and collaboration outside of school) and that the answer is at the back of the book, and don't look! This isn't any specific person's fault it just happens this way.

We need to get away from memorization-based learning, understand that people learn better in small, organized groups (everyone is better at certain things) and that creatively smart people should be able to prosper with more intellectual stimulation



Midterm Election Summary

By Kevin Westfahl Class of 2012



*We may have all come on
different ships, but we're
in the same boat now.*

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In this recent midterm election, the Republican Party was able to take control of the House of Representatives and increase its numbers in the Senate as well. This has some pundits making comments that are against the Republican House. "These are the kinds of policies that will lead America into a 21st century ditch from which we will not be able to come back," says one political commentator. All of this negative criticism has been rooted in the fact that for the first half of President Obama's term the GOP has disagreed with his policies and filibustered the majority of the bills brought up by the Democrats. The fear that this may continue for the next two years and nothing will get done is not a view backed by much evidence. On the contrary, now that the Republican Party has gained control of the House they will have to create policies that will help the American people. This may not seem like the case right now but that is only because the Republican members of Congress felt like they were being treated like second class citizens while they were the minority party. This anger will easily dissipate once the Republican members of Congress see the tasks that they have layed out in front of them. If they do not make their own policies on the major issues like unemployment that are facing the American people there is a very good chance that they get destroyed in the monumental 2012 elections. While the President's policy will be forced to change now that he does not have overwhelming support, America will still push bills through by coming to bipartisan compromises. The Republicans may be hard pressed at the moment but people like the House speaker elect John Boehner have stated that he agrees with about 90% of Obama's plans for education and believes that the President is doing a good job with the war in Afghanistan. However, Obama will have to pass some bills in order to make the Republican Party happy. For instance, he will have to decide whether he will come up with a solution for the people that are pro- Bush tax cuts or just let them expire and anger the GOP. President Obama will be able to get things done but in order to do so he will have to adopt an approach that will mirror that of a relationship. Just like a relationship he will have to give in to the other in order to be able to get support for the bills that he deems are essential to America thriving. Historically the two parties have been able to work well together while having a Democratic president and a Republican Congress. For instance, the United States budget has not been balanced by any Republican President in the last fifty years and also has not been balanced by a Democratic Congress in the last forty years. One of the Republican Congress Democratic President combinations that were able to balance the budget and make the country boom was during the Clinton administration. In 1994 the Democrats lost the midterm election to the Republicans in the middle of Clinton's first term. Bill Clinton had to deal with the new majority leader Newt Gingrich in order for any bill to get passed. While this seemed like a giant hardship at the time both saw that it was for the good of the country to negotiate in order to stay in good graces with the public. This worked for both parties because although Clinton got reelected, the Republican Party was also able to retain the Congress. Today, it is very possible that both parties will look back on the positive results they achieved through negotiating less than fifteen years ago and decide to pass necessary bills needed to uplift the economy. Hopefully, the course of history will repeat itself and America can get back to the economic form that we can be proud of.

Reflections on Obama

By Charlie Mastoloni Class of 2013

For these past couple months, I'm sure many of you have been hearing criticism of our president, Barack Obama. We had heard the typical labeling of Mr. Obama as a socialist as well as people saying that he has done nothing good for this country. I personally have heard some people say that he is no better than George W. Bush. All of these rants and more have made me deeply concerned on whether people have looked at both sides of the spectrum. Fox News especially has done a good job of criticizing our president about his supposed carefree spending, but if you want the truth, Mr. Obama has actually had quite the presidency so far in terms of helping this country. Obama has rewritten America's social contract to make health care accessible for all citizens. He has brought 100,000 troops home from war and forged a once unthinkable consensus around the endgame for the Bush administration's \$3 trillion blunder in Iraq. He has bought about sweeping financial reforms that elevate the rights of consumers over Wall Street bankers and has given regulators powerful new additions to preclude another financial disaster. But to be even more in depth, I think we must first divide the Obama presidency into 8 key areas:

1. Averting a Depression

The first thing that any critic will likely point out is one number: 9.6 percent. That figure represents the amount of unemployment in this country and cries out failure, but let us contemplate for a second what would have happened if the Obama leadership had not stepped in and we were being led by Republicans. According to studies done by Moody's and Princeton, more than 16 million jobs would have been lost without the intervention of TARP, the Recovery Act and the Federal Reserve—double the damage actually suffered. Unemployment would have spiked to 16.5 percent and next year's federal deficit would have been more than doubled to 2.6 trillion dollars.

2. Making Recovery

President Obama has helped create perhaps the most important piece of legislation under his presidency with the Recovery Act. This law included the most progressive middle class tax cut ever enacted, delivering relief and benefits to 95% of working families. It also invested \$94 billion in clean energy and \$100 billion in education. Moreover, it devoted \$128 billion to health care and \$70 billion to mending America's safety net, including direct cash payments to the elderly, the disabled and impoverished parents, as well as billions invested in low-income housing, food stamps, and child care.

3. Helping Auto companies

After pushing his administration to lay out a plan that would not simply bail out the auto industry with condition-free cash, Obama planned to use the government's leverage over automakers to set them on a more competitive course. Despite cries





of "socialism" and "Government Motors," the administration bought a 61 percent stake in GM, fired its chief executive, forced both bondholders and UAW members to make concessions and steered the company through bankruptcy in record time. Simultaneously, the administration invested \$8 billion in Chrysler to secure the company's shotgun marriage to Italian automaker Fiat. It's difficult to overstate how effective and efficient the government's intervention has been. By risking \$60 billion, Obama saved a third as many jobs as the entire stimulus package, which cost 13 times more. In fact, the auto industry has not only survived, it has roared back to life. GM is profitable and preparing to go public in an IPO that could allow the government to recoup its investment. Ford is prospering, edging out Japanese rivals for quality, and even Chrysler is expanding its market share.

4. Reforming Health Care

Obama's most proud moment has been reforming the health care system. It holds true to Joe Biden's statement: "It's a big ... deal." All progressives since Theodore Roosevelt wanted it, all Democrats since Harry Truman fought for it, but President Obama was the one who achieved this monumental act. Over the next 10 years, it will extend coverage to 32 million uninsured Americans by expanding the eligibility for Medicaid and subsidizing insurance for low and middle income citizens. By the end of this decade, 95% of Americans will have health insurance. This also creates more rights for the patients. Starting in 2014 insurance companies can no longer deny coverage based on pre existing conditions and from imposing annual caps on benefit payouts. Other rights have come much sooner in this new law. As of September, insurance companies can no longer revoke coverage for those who get sick. Children with existing conditions can no longer be denied insurance. Also, younger Americans can now stay on their parents' policies until they are 26. In addition, 1 million elderly citizens will receive checks for \$250 to fill the doughnut whole gap in Medicare's coverage of prescription drugs. Furthermore, the law accomplishes all of this while extending the solvency of Medicare by a dozen years and cutting the deficit by \$143 billion over the next decade. With his victory on Healthcare, Obama defeated the anti-government republicans that sought to defeat him politically and created a program that will benefit Americans for decades to come.

5. Reducing Corporate Welfare

Obama also used the health care bill to end corporate welfare in an entirely different arena: student lending. For decades, megabanks like Sallie Mae have reaped billions by doing the paperwork on loans to college students — even though Uncle Sam sets the rates and assumes virtually all the risk. The President's Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act kicked private banks out of the federal lending market. The victory over corporate lobbyists will reduce lending costs by more than \$60 billion over the next decade, \$36 billion of which is being reinvested to expand federal grants for low-income and middle-class students. The law also makes huge investments in historically black schools and community colleges, caps student-loan repayment at 10 percent of the borrower's income and pays for a program to forgive the debts of students who make their careers in public service.

6. Restoring America's Credibility

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

-George Bernard Shaw

As President, Barack Obama has stuck to the timetable he created, sending home nearly 100,000 troops from Iraq. This meant that he overruled this general on the ground, Ray Odierno, who wanted to keep our men and women in Iraq longer. While Obama still has yet to end combat operations in Afghanistan, he has managed to help restore credibility in the eyes of other nations. Approval ratings in Europe have skyrocketed to the 60's and 70's. Approval is also up 10 points in Poland and Russia, 20 points in China, and 30 points in Indonesia, France, and Germany. Overall global confidence in America has soared from 21 percent during the Bush administration to 64 percent today. Moreover, the president helped relive high tension relations with Russia and renegotiated cuts in nuclear arms.

7. Protecting Consumers

Obama has passed new regulations to help reform Wall Street and to preclude another financial disaster. Foremost, the Federal Reserve and the FDIC now have the power to seize and dismantle firms like AIG and Lehman Brothers and to force the financial industry to pay for the costs of their liquidation. Banks can no longer gamble federally insured deposits on high risk investments and they are now required to risk a portion of their own assets in the investments they sell. That move was designed to prevent companies like Goldman Sachs from profiting off "sh*tty deals". The most important aspect this new legislation covers is the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. They will now have the authority and power to protect consumers from bad loans and credit deals, similar to the FDA protecting patients from dangerous drugs.

8. Clean Energy

The stimulus has allotted \$94 billion for clean energy to help create such things as solar power plants in the western areas of the United States. The investment is scheduled to double the nation's renewable energy capacity by 2012. It will also double the nation's capacity for wind turbines and solar panels. Not only that, but the President also created the Cash for Clunkers programs that led to over 700,000 gas guzzling cars to be turned in for far more energy efficient cars. Auto companies are also now required to make fuel standards high enough to save 2 billion barrels of oil and reduce carbon emissions by 21% over the next two decades.

I would like you to see that Barack Obama's achievements have been severely under appreciated. He has helped create the most sweeping reform of any president in the past few decades. He helped save our country's economy from falling into another Great Depression and always has had the best interest of people in his heart when making these reforms. So finally, I ask you to consider these lists of things as well as the many things that went unmentioned next time you hear someone criticize Mr. Obama. Is he really such a bad president? The answer after reading this article should simply be no. He has truly done a great deal of good for this nation.



Infrastructure Dvlpt: It's Time for a Rail-volution

By Michael Whelan Class of 2012

Today's America is a country of economic crisis and turmoil. Although the third quarter growth rate was 2.5%, the unemployment rate still stands at a whopping nine percent. America is technically out of the recession, but you could be forgiven for feeling like we're not. It's time to decide how future economic growth should be shaped and encouraged in this country. Specifically, we face a decision on the government's role in the economy. Should Washington restore the confidence of the private sector by declaring a period of fiscal austerity in order to reduce the deficit, as many troubled European states have? Or should the United States stimulate our economy, by pumping in government resources? The answer is stimulus, but stimulus as an investment. The last thing America needs is another stopgap measure like the bailouts and unsustainable tax breaks. The only way Washington can truly stimulate the economy for the long term is by investing for the long term, creating real jobs and expanding plans that will help America move towards a more prosperous future. Indeed it is time to invest in our infrastructure.

There are few things that encourage both short-term and long-term growth like infrastructure investment. In the short term, building and repairing our roads, rails, and runways would create jobs in construction and engineering, and encourage companies to grow by improving the networks they use on a regular basis. In the long term, infrastructure investment enables new businesses and expands markets by opening new areas to growth from the wider economy. It also encourages development near the transportation corridor itself. Think about how Downtown Fairfield is right next to the train station or how all the retail along Black Rock Turnpike is easily accessible by the Merritt Parkway. None of that development would've been built were it not for easily available transportation. If we want to grow our economy, we must repair and expand America's infrastructure for future demands. The country won't grow well without it.

But before we can build anew, it's important to fix what we already have. America's bridges and highways are a mess. Before the tragic bridge collapse in Minneapolis in 2007, the US DOT had found that 26% of the nation's bridges were structurally deficient. That disaster should be a warning: they need to be repaired or replaced. Our airports are at capacity and were not designed to accommodate the needs of modern travel. They are often located in inconvenient or congested areas, and do not have the facilities for post 9/11 security measures. We need to rebuild airports for the modern world. Finally, there are the railroads. The American rail system was once the envy of the world, but now it's the butt of jokes. The freight rail system is decent, but suffers from excessive regulation by the Federal Railroad Administration. These regulations hurt passenger rail even more. The Acela, America's fastest train, has a top speed of 165mph, yet is only able to average half of that because of onerous speed and weight restrictions. Yet while overregulation does hurt passenger rail, it is the poor infrastructure itself that plays the greatest part in creating slow, inconvenient rail networks. The government needs to update its regulations, but more importantly it must repair our transportation networks.

When it comes to the nation's rail networks, some are so deteriorated that "repairing" them may seem like building entirely new infrastructure. And it should, because that's exactly what we need to do when it comes to this mode. All factors point to rail as the mode most deserving of investment to create NEW infrastructure. America needs new high speed rail lines and mass transit networks. It is time for us to catch up. Compared to other developed nations, our rail and transit systems appear to be those of a third world



country. It is time for Washington to invest in rail, just as Eisenhower invested in highways. Rail is the most efficient mode of transport we have. A two track light rail line can move 20,000 people per hour in each direction. It takes 18 lanes of freeway to do the same, assuming that most people drive to work alone (statistics show that only 10% of drivers carpool). Rail is also better for the environment. The average New Yorker's carbon footprint is about a quarter of the average American's simply because inhabitants of that city use rail transit every day. Rail transit is not only better for the environment; it is the best way of using infrastructure to stimulate the economy. Development clusters around stations, resulting in a creative climate of economic innovation that cannot be duplicated by a highway or airport. Finally, rail is the most practical to expand. The mode takes up far less space and is less destructive than airports and highways, a valuable asset when our existing infrastructure is near developed areas or sensitive environments. Ultimately, America needs to invest in all our infrastructure, but rail is the mode most deserving of expansion.

So now the question must be asked: How will we pay for this investment? Any infrastructure project will come with sticker shock, but when it comes to rail and transit, it's usually worth it (as noted above). Right now, most infrastructure projects are paid for through the highway trust fund, which receives its funding primarily through the national gas tax. The fund however, is rapidly being depleted. It has been raided for years by politicians looking to fill budgetary holes and shore up the deficit. One way to replenish it would be to raise the gas tax and peg it to inflation, or raise national taxes on motor vehicles. Considering the results of the recent midterm election, however, that proposal is unlikely to gain much steam. A more realistic approach, already used by a Los Angeles transit plan, is to raise a local sales tax to cover some of the cost of infrastructure projects and obtain the rest through government bonds. These bonds could eventually be paid back through transit fares or highway tolls once the project is built. If the Feds are feeling generous, they may offer a simple grant rather than a bond, the method used to fund many stimulus projects.

No matter how it's paid for, a major investment in infrastructure products will not be cheap. Yet the cost of investment is nothing when compared to the cost of not doing anything. America's competitors are already worlds ahead of us when it comes to infrastructure. In the last decade China has built 4,617 miles of high speed rail. The U.S. still does not have a single mile of high speed rail that meets the international threshold speed. That's just one example of how we are falling behind. If America wants to stay competitive, Washington must repair the nation's aging infrastructure and fund new rail and transit networks. This is an investment that we can't afford not to make.

The First Casualty of War is Truth

By Quinn Myers Class of 2012

Since the end of the First World War, the United States government has enacted extremely destructive foreign policy programs all over the world. By taking the role of “superpower,” the U.S. has been a world leader in human rights abuses and for-profit wars with devastating consequences. The examples are countless: a demoralizing war in Vietnam in the 60’s and 70’s, antidemocratic “interventions” in South America in the 80’s, and two wars for oil and global hegemony in the early 2000’s. And the worst part is, these horrible events only scratch the surface. It has now become normal to accept violent acts of hate and ignorance, and in recent years there has been a total disregard for any moral structure in United States foreign affairs. Most citizens are either not aware or are simply apathetic towards the horrendous malfeasances committed everyday by the military, C.I.A, and many other government agencies. This is a huge problem, with most of the blame lying in the major media outlets, whose goal is to entertain rather than report. True journalism hardly exists anymore, with no one having the desire or frankly the guts to report the truth. Companies like CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC report on frivolous garbage while innocent people are being slaughtered all over the world. So now, because of the constant hyperbole and absurdities that we hear everyday on the news, it is up to the people, the general public, to unearth and right the wrongs committed by governments all over the world. This is where Wikileaks comes in.

Before we jump into all of the allegations and opinions that have been popping up recently, it’s important to find out what Wikileaks really is. Most simply, Wikileaks is a non-profit organization that publishes both classified and unclassified documents from different sources and leaks. It began in 2006, and according to the group’s website, was founded by, “Chinese dissidents, journalists, mathematicians and start-up company technologists, from the US, Taiwan, Europe, Australia and South Africa.” Since 2007, Australian activist Julian Assange has publically led the organization. According to their website, Wikileaks’ main goal is to bring important news and information to the public while providing a secure and anonymous way for sources to leak information. It’s important to remember that Wikileaks relies on user submissions, and they have no hand in obtaining individual pieces of information-they only release it. Since its creation, Wikileaks has released millions of documents and videos, ranging from corruption by African despots to the contents of Sarah Palin’s personal email. However, the most provocative leaks, and certainly the most interesting, have come in the past eight months with the release of hundreds of thousands of United States government classified documents. These documents, most of which pertain to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and diplomatic relationships between the United States and their allies, are extremely important to the current fabric of world affairs because they challenge the dominance of the American foreign policy system which dictates many of the decisions made by world leaders.

In July and October of 2010, Wikileaks released two of the largest classified leaks ever, known as the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs. The leaks contained documents relating to the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and span from 2004 to 2009. The documents gave specific details of tens of thousands of civilian casualties and escalating friendly fire caused by members of the United States military. The leaks also show evidence of the Pakistani government defending the Taliban and other insurgent forces, many of which



are considered to be the main enemies of the United States in Afghanistan. These leaks are important because they confirm the devastating effects of U.S. military interference in the Middle East. The documents also provide evidence that the War in Iraq was one of imperialist ambitions fueled by some of the top American corporations. The information provided in the War Logs is also imperative to the public opinion of the War in Afghanistan, which has clearly been a failure. In the past several years, the U.S. military has made essentially no progress against the Taliban, whose numbers have been increasing steadily. The war has destroyed an entire nation, while alienating U.S. allies and creating distrust among the American public. Hopefully with the release of these documents, citizens all over the world will speak up and put a stop to the crimes being committed by the United States and its allies.

While the Iraq and Afghanistan leaks spurred strong criticism from both the Left and Right, this “excitement” was nothing compared to the response to Wikileaks most recent leak, the release of 250,000 documents detailing U.S. diplomatic relations. These documents, which have been released to The New York Times and several other world news companies, have given a distinct insight into the foreign affairs of the United States and their top allies, including Britain and Saudi Arabia. As most people may have noticed, these leaks have not gone over very well with most journalists and pundits, who have turned their backs on Wikileaks; some have even labeled the website as a “terrorist organization.” This is a classic example of mass media hyperbole-using fear tactics to coerce viewers and make money off ignorance. This is a huge disservice to the American public, because most people don’t know the true details of the diplomatic cables. For example, the fact that the United States has been conducting drone attacks in Yemen without their governments consent seems to have been surprisingly overlooked. As has the kidnapping and torture of an innocent German grocer by the CIA in 2003. To top it all off, the cables also expose a cover up of 15,000 previously unknown civilian deaths in Iraq. These facts have been barely reported on, even though they are extremely important when reporting the whole story. Once again, the mass media has failed in its job to report straight news with no spin or unnecessary fluff. Wikileaks is doing the American people a service by providing the truth, which is exactly what we need to participate in our democracy. Howard Zinn said is best when he said, “Democracy is not a spectator sport.”

To bring this article to a close, I want to stress that as citizens of the United States of America, it is our job to hold our government accountable. This is because the actions of our leaders and their allies affect our world standing and our well being, and recently, the U.S. has been cast in a negative light throughout the world. In order to hold our government accountable, we must be well informed on the current state of the world and domestic affairs. This however, has become impossible with the 24-hour news industry focusing on profits over people. It’s come to the point where to find out what the government is doing, we must rely on an international website to report the truth. The people who complain about Wikileaks on television or in an editorial need to realize that they are in fact part of the problem. Wikileaks has provided a chance for the people of the world to oppose the unnecessary wars and corporate influence on our politicians. If we strive for greater government transparency and political honesty, our democracy will be strengthened. This is why I hope Wikileaks continues to leak documents detailing crimes by governments all over the world.

A basic tenet of a healthy democracy is open dialogue and transparency.

-Peter Fenn

Tensions Heat Up in Korea

By Sean McGuinness Class of 2011

Korea has been a country divided since 1945, when the allies won World War II. The United States and Soviet Union divided the country along the 38th parallel, initially just as trustees until an election could be organized. When the election came, the US and USSR backed different candidates, and the state split along the 38th parallel. North Korea became a communist totalitarian state in the image of Stalinist Russia, and South Korea eventually became a capitalist democracy. Both states claim legitimate dominion over the entire Peninsula. After the Korean War of 1950-53, the states were divided by the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), and an uneasy ceasefire ensued, a ceasefire which has lasted, more or less, for 60 years.

A couple weeks ago, North Korea blatantly broke the ceasefire, shelling a South Korean island. The attack, which comes after the announcement that Kim Jong- un will be North Korea's next leader, killed two South Korean soldiers, wounded dozens and burned over sixty civilian homes. It was the second attack by North Korea this year, following the sinking of a South Korea Naval vessel in March. That attack killed 43 South Korean sailors.

North Korea is becoming increasingly erratic. It has declared that it will not accept the traditional maritime border with the South, and it has declared four Naval "firing-zones" where it says it will open fire on ships that penetrate them. In November, Pyongyang revealed that it has uranium-enrichment facilities capable of making high-enriched uranium suitable for nuclear bombs. Combined with the long range missiles tested in 2006, the enrichment facilities mean that it is possible for North Korea to launch a nuclear strike against Hawaii or the California coast.

North Korea is more dangerous now than at any time since the Korean War. The country is preparing to switch leaders for the first time in 30 years. The notoriously secretive country may be attempting to strengthen their hand for future talks regarding their nuclear program. Pyongyang is sending a message of "don't ignore me, I'm dangerous," to the rest of the world, particularly the US and South Korea, and trying to force America to pay her to be reasonable. By demonstrating that she has the capacity to make nukes and is unafraid of military conflict, North Korea is saying, "I have nukes now, or I will in the very near future. If you don't want me to have or use nukes, give me something, and maybe we can talk about me not having nukes."

The US cannot cave to this, what amounts to essentially a terrorist threat made on the Nation-State level. We must make it clear to Pyongyang that continued build up will not lead to an increase in aid from the US. If Pyongyang wants US aid restored, and they need US aid to counter the influence of China, than they must give first. The US must make it clear to North Korea that force will be met with (equal) force, that the United States does not answer to ultimatums. We must show that if North Korea wants US aid restored, than Pyongyang must give the US what she wants and stop trying to bully the US into helping them.



Opposing Prop 19

By Matt Connelly Class of 2012

In the recent California election, voters turned down Proposition 19, a law that would legalize marijuana for recreational use and cultivation for people of 21 years of age or older. The argument that Proposition 19 presents has been controversial for many years. This latest attempt to legalize marijuana has left out many of the harsh details that are inherent with passing this law. The first and most obvious reason that Proposition 19 could not have been passed is it directly violates the federally administered Controlled Substances Act (CSA) (21 U.S.C. § 811). In this set of laws it states the prohibition of possessing, cultivating, and distributing marijuana. Plain and simple, state governments must not commit insubordination towards federal laws.

Besides the legal faults that hindered in the passing of this law, Proposition 19 brings forth many moral faults along with it. In a recent NBC Dateline episode Richard Lee, the founder of Oaksterdam University, a cannabis growing college based out of Oakland, California, outlined what he saw to be a family friendly business. Lee spoke on how the medical marijuana stores being developed were all family friendly; parents could travel to the back of the store to buy their weed while they left their children in front where they could have ice cream and lollipops. Medical marijuana stores have started a market towards children. Most people would agree that marketing drugs towards children is a huge moral fault. If pot had been legalized for recreational use, it would have had the ability to extend even father towards children.

Another argument that Proposition 19 was using hoping to persuade voters with was that the California is focusing too much of its attention to weed, when it could be trying to stop the circulation of the harder drugs such as heroin or cocaine. Think about this logically, by opening up the marijuana market for anyone to take part in it risk free, this eliminates a huge source of revenue for major drug cartels. Drug cartel would simply replace the marijuana that they had previously been selling with more hard drugs so that they would not lose what was previously a substantial part of their income.

Proposition 19 was riding off of all the wrong reasons. Not only was it violating a federal act, but it left out some of the realities that can come with the legalizing the drug for recreational use. These include increasing its already large market towards children and the forcing hard drug circulation, and that is why I am pleased that it wasn't passed.

Why I'm Pro Prop 19

By Nithin Vallabhaneni Class of 2012

Proposition 19 was an attempt to legalize marijuana in California. This proposition was voted upon, on November 2. Unfortunately, this act was voted against. Proposition 19, or Prop 19 as it is more commonly known has very few flaws and an overwhelming amount of positives. One so called “negative” is that adults will be more likely to commit a DUI, or a driving under the influence offense. This prediction is absolutely false. According Norml.Org, the effects of marijuana on a driver is minimal to none. On top of this fact, Prop 19 also makes it illegal to drive while under the influence of marijuana. If someone is found “high” while driving they will be punished, similar to that of one who “drinks and drives”. The positives of Prop 19 far outweigh the negatives. California is currently facing a \$19,000,000,000 budget deficit. In California 16 billion dollars worth of marijuana is sold and consumed IN A SINGLE YEAR. If California were to legalize marijuana and place a tax upon it, then this budget deficit could be paid off within a few years. California is already on track to legalize the drug anyway. Senator Leno of California recently passed a bill that would make possession of marijuana under an ounce (a large amount) a fine of merely 100 dollars, making it equal to a traffic ticket. One of the major reasons marijuana is still illegal is due to the tremendous power of alcohol companies’ lobbyists. Alcohol companies do not want marijuana to be legalized because if it is, people will stop consuming alcohol as often. Why should one liver destroying drug control the future of a seemingly harmless plant? Alcohol and tobacco are legal drugs. However, these drugs are FAR worse than marijuana. Alcohol impairs judgment after merely one drink and destroys ones’ liver and brain functions. Tobacco (especially in cigarettes) is mixed with carcinogens, toxins, etc and the result is a product that delivers nicotine in the most efficient way straight to the lungs. The nicotine corrodes the lungs and destroys normal body functions, such as breathing. Marijuana on the other hand is far better. Marijuana’s effects on the lungs are minimal. When using a vaporizer, a smoking device, the already slight negative effects of marijuana are completely diminished. Both tobacco and alcohol force the user to become both mentally and physically hooked upon the drug. When these tobacco smokers and alcohol drinkers cease to consume these products they enter a state of withdrawal. This state of withdrawal takes its toll upon the body both mentally and physically. Those who are habitual users of tobacco and alcohol are physically and mentally dependent on the drug. On the other hand, marijuana is a non-addictive and non-harmful substance according to scienceblog.org. Medical marijuana has already been proven to ease those in pain. Medical marijuana is extremely beneficial to those who are going through chemotherapy. It helps to ease their pain. It also improves the appetite of those who are undergoing chemo. If marijuana was legalized, there would certainly not be an increase in those who use it. The thought that “Oh, I would smoke marijuana, but it’s illegal” does not enter the thoughts of most marijuana smokers. Those who do not smoke marijuana chose not to do so for reasons other than the fact that it is illegal. The amount of crimes that are committed solely due to marijuana offenses is staggering. The courts and jails are riddled with people who did nothing, other than smoke a plant. This is extremely unfair and wastes the tax payers’ dollars. If marijuana were legalized this would save money along with adding money due to the tax placed upon marijuana.



Nae, Nae, TSA

By Sean McGuinness Class of 2011

“Remove all items from your pockets. Remove your shoes and any baggy outwear. Step into the scanner and raise your hands and arms away from your sides. If you choose to opt out of the scan, you will be subject to a tough and invasive pat-down search.”

No, this isn't a set of instructions given to arriving inmates at a prison; they are the instructions that anyone who wishes to fly must follow. And the “scanner” mentioned in the instructions isn't a metal detector or some other non-invasive technology, it is a full-body scanner, a device which, in the words of the TSA is designed to “look through clothing and attempts at concealment to locate potentially dangerous objects.” It is a machine to remove any semblance of privacy or freedom in quest for the illusion of security.

The full body scanners are an affront to American liberty. They amount to an unlawful, unwarranted bodily search, and they operate on the premise of guilty until proven innocent. They are in direct opposition to the fourth amendment, which states,

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

Full body scanners kill that protection, urinate on the corpse, and have relations with its mother. They undermine the entire notion of the presumption of innocence, reasonable suspicion and the right to privacy. Contrary to what the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) would lead us to believe, the desire to fly does not constitute a reasonable suspicion that you are going to commit a crime. Full body scanners are the first nail in the coffin of American Freedom, and no amount of security is worth that.

TSA has attempted to rationalize the full body scanners by pointing out that they are optional. This is true; a traveler can decide to opt out of taking the scan. If they do decide to opt out, they have two options. They cannot fly, or they can submit to an invasive and probing pat-down search. Under TSA's new security regulations, screening personnel may now use their palms and fingers to “feel and probe for hidden weapons and devices around sensitive body parts.” In other words, they can grope you. Strip search or grope? That isn't much of a choice.

TSA's entire rationale behind the enhanced security measures is that the safety and security of all is worth the compromised freedom of some. That principle is blatantly erroneous and amoral. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, “Those who would trade essential liberty for a little temporary safety deserve neither.”

Cartoons

