

A low-angle photograph of the Brooklyn Bridge, showing its massive stone towers and the intricate network of suspension cables. In the foreground, a crowd of people is gathered, and one person is holding up a yellow sign that reads "END THIS WAR". The sky is overcast and grey.

Zeitgeist

The Spirit of the Times – November 2011

Leaders of the Political Awareness Club

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About the Club

In a matter of years, our generation will be the status quo. We will be running the businesses and casting the votes and contributing to the culture that will serve to identify our country for decades to come. As such, it is our duty to cultivate a devotion to political curiosity and vigilance so that we can shape this future in the most well-informed manner we possibly can. The Political Awareness Club is a part of that cultivation, providing an environment for students to discuss and debate what is going on in the world and develop their own unique perspective they can carry with them into the adult world. We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

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The End of the Iraq War

Owen Gibson '13

Regarded by many Americans to be the biggest mistake of George W. Bush's presidency, the Iraq War is finally drawing to a conclusion. Having begun in March of 2003 with the purpose of locating illicit nuclear arms, the invasion of Iraq resulted in the destabilization of the country and ultimately dragged on as a lengthy and costly occupation. To the relief of most Americans, it finally seems to be at an end.

The first major step toward ending the war occurred on February 27, 2009,

when President Obama announced in a speech that the U.S. combat operations in Iraq would end by August 31, 2010. However, he also mentioned that a "transitional force" of up to 50,000 soldiers would remain to train Iraqi Security Forces, conduct counterterrorism operations, and provide general support until the end of 2011.

Coalition forces, beginning with the United Kingdom in April 2009 and Australia in July, started to withdraw and hand over control to the Iraqi government. U.S. forces began to depart in June of 2009, leaving Baghdad and transferring control of 38 bases over to the Iraqis.

On February 17, 2010, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, announced that the mission name "Operation Iraqi Freedom" would be changed to "Operation New Dawn," effective September 1st. Then, on April 18, 2010, U.S. and Iraqi forces killed Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the leader of the al-Qaeda in Iraq, in a joint operation in

Tikrit. This devastating blow to al-Qaeda leadership was a reassuring sign that the Iraqis would be capable of self-reliance.

Despite suffering several major attacks and bombings, the last U.S. combat brigade withdrew from Iraq on August 19, 2010, leaving behind the planned "transitional force". Iraq has set about developing its armed forces, using \$13 billion in arms deals with the U.S. to build up its army, navy, and air force, and become a state-of-the-art fighting force.

The UN has also lifted its Hussein-era restrictions on Iraq, allowing it to now participate in civil nuclear research programs.

In 2011, Iraq-based al-Qaeda was officially defeated following the killing of Huthaifa al-Batawi, the only man left in the group as the head leader. In September 2011, the Iraqi government signed a contract to buy 18 F-16

fighter jets, and is considering doubling its order so as to be able to battle a stubborn Islamic insurgency. Finally, in a speech on October 21, 2011, President Obama announced that all U.S. military personnel will leave Iraq by the end of the year, in compliance with agreements with the Iraqi government.

As long and tedious as the Iraq War has seemed, it appears some real progress has been made in Iraq: deposing the Hussein regime, electing a new government, and ultimately stabilizing the country to the point where it can rely on itself for welfare and defense. It has been a long time in coming, but it's a relief to see the end of the Iraq War.



Occupy Oakland

Charlie Mastoloni '13



The country has been gripped in the past few months by the Occupy Movement. What started in Zucotti Park as a small gathering to protest corporate influence and greed has spread across the United States and worldwide to places such as Rome, London, and Madrid. People around the world are taking notice as the protesters spread their message of mending the economic inequality between the top 1% of all income earners and the bottom 99%. One location people have been paying particular attention to during all this has been Oakland, where some of the most tumultuous events of the movement are taking place.

For starters, the protesters succeeded in shutting down the Port of Oakland. The Port of Oakland is one of America's most

bustling ports and by shutting it down the protesters are proving that they are not just a rag-tag group of unorganized hippies after all. These protests have meaning and purpose, and they will not rest until the financial district is reorganized.

Not all things they have done are to be looked upon in a completely positive light, though. For one thing, the amount of vandalism in Oakland has increased tenfold since the emergence of its Occupy outpost. Shop windows are being broken and nightly street fires have become as consistent as the moon rising. That being said, this is not enough reason to disregard the message. The looters possess the very mentality that this organization is trying to eradicate. The true protesters want small businesses to profit

and have more power than they do now. The very thing they are protesting is greed. It would be rash to base an image of the activists on criminals who have managed to mix in with them. That is a sweeping generalization, and one that simply isn't correct.

The people of Oakland are not the ones at fault here. Much of the violence has been escalated by the Oakland Police Department. Recently, police have become rather trigger-happy with their tear gas when protesters go into areas they feel they shouldn't. As bad as tear gas is, it hasn't stopped there: police brutality has also been abundant. The culmination of all this was when protester and veteran Scott Olsen was hospitalized on October 25th after sustaining a skull fracture caused by a gas canister fired at his head. This man served in Iraq only to



be beaten down by the very country he swore to protect. All in the name of "justice". Kayvan Sabehgi, another veteran, was recently admitted into intensive care with a lacerated spleen from beatings by Oakland police. Here is his story:

"[after being told to disperse] ...they lined up in front of me. I was talking to one of them, saying, 'Why are you doing this?' when one moved forward and hit me in my arm and legs and back with his baton. Then three or four cops tackled me and arrested me."

The police, it seems, have taken to violence as a way to deal with these protests. By far, Occupy Oakland is the most violent leg of the movement, due to not only the few criminals that are mixing in with the legitimate protesters, but primarily the police themselves. Police brutality laws are being broken all over, leaving far too many injured in the wake. This is a violation of the laws and principles of this country and it needs to stop.

Could Life End For The Merchant Of Death?

Mark Giannini, '13



If you have seen the 2005 Nicolas Cage thriller “Lord of War”, you may sense some similarities to the infamous Viktor Bout. Viktor Bout, the notorious arms dealer, has been allegedly selling and supplying terrorist groups and rebellions with weapons since the mid-1990s. His “business” has been officially deemed by the United States as an “international arms-trafficking network” and Bout is on trial for the conspiracy to sell anti-aircraft missiles and other arms to Colombian terrorists who would use these weapons against Americans.

Bout was finally caught by American officials posing as Colombian terrorists from FARC, the “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia” (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). He planned on selling “tens of thousands of AK-47 rifles, millions of rounds of ammunition, hundreds of missiles, ultra lightweight airplanes, and other military equipment.” Although Mr. Dayan, Bout’s lawyer, said that this was a “con”, reports indicate that it was in fact going to

happen. Preet Bharara, a United States attorney, calls the arsenal of weapons to be supplied by Mr. Bout to be “the envy of small countries”, and that these weapons would be used for no other purpose than to “kill Americans.”

The trial itself was a relatively short one considering the importance and numerous variables involved. This case lasted a mere three weeks, ending with a conviction that Bout was guilty of “conspiring to kill American citizens... by agreeing to sell weapons to drug enforcement informants..., of conspiring to acquire and export surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles, and of conspiring to provide material support or resources in the form of weapons to a foreign terrorist organization.” These crimes result in a minimum jail time of 25 years, but could go all the way to life in prison.

After the two and a half years that it took to get Viktor Bout from his original place of arrest in Bangkok to America, the Russian government is now requesting that he be returned to Moscow. The

Americans see this as a very poor plan and all rumors of their trading of Viktor Bout for prisoners are deemed “absolutely baseless”. Such a rumor has no basis as the Americans feel that releasing such a renowned worldwide criminal to Russia could result in his freedom, which is unfavorable for all countries in the world. Viktor Bout, one of the world’s most dangerous men, needs to be imprisoned and in the United States. If we allow him to go to another country, he could be freed or given back the power that he had before. Even with Russia’s pressure to allow Viktor

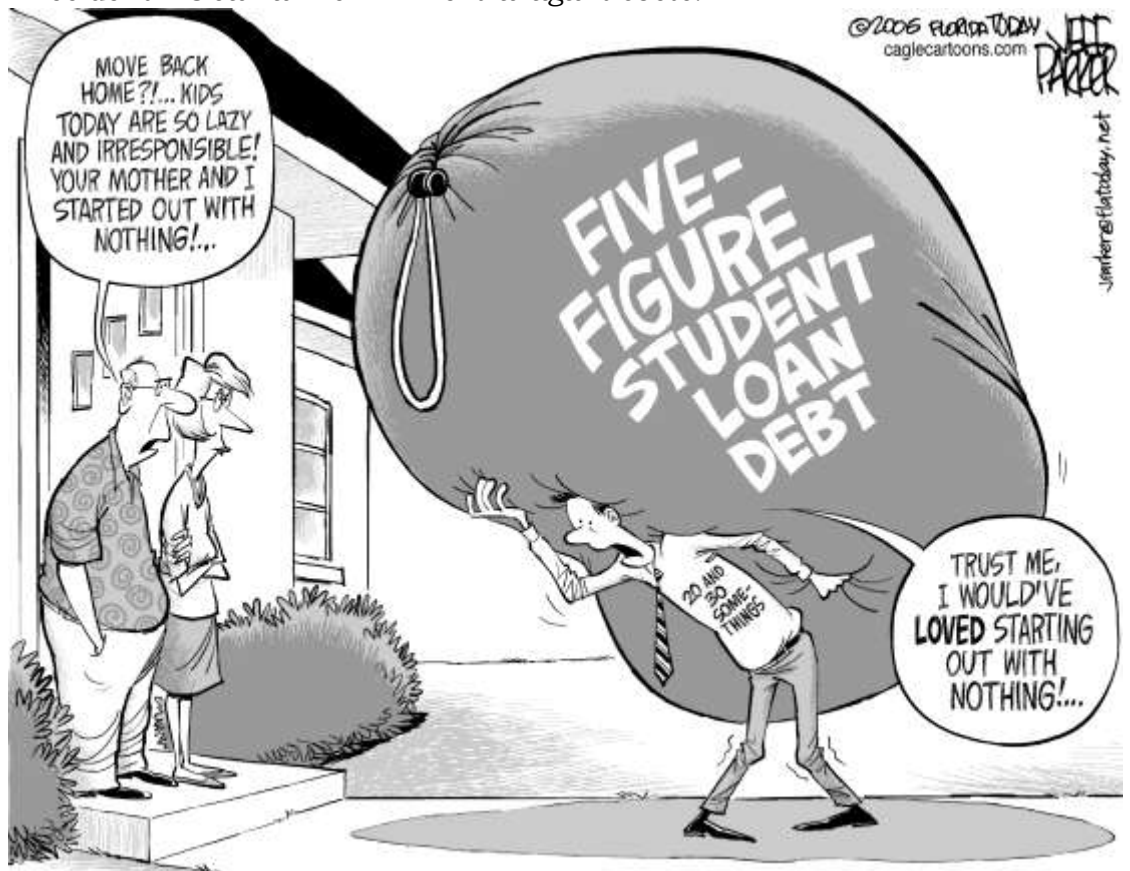
Bout to return, we must hold strong and not allow the world’s leading arms dealer to be given another chance to fuel the wars, rebellions, and genocides of the world. Viktor Bout has supplied to the Taliban, Al Qaeda, civil wars in Africa, genocide movements and many others worldwide. He offers no good to the world and his business is the funding and supplying of death and destruction. The Merchant of Death’s reign as a supreme arms dealer and the world’s deadliest man must come to an end immediately.

Savvy Scheme could Save Students: Obama Has New Student Loan Plan

Kevin Culligan, '13

On Wednesday, October 26th, during a visit to the Auraria Campus in Denver, Colorado, President Obama outlined for the assembled students a new plan aimed at easing the debt generated by having to pay off federal loans for college tuition. With this plan, President Obama is addressing what has become a major issue in America, and a bigger problem than most people realize. USA Today recently reported that by the end of 2011, student loans yet to be repaid will surpass \$1 trillion- greater than the nation’s credit card debt. And with tuition prices rising an additional 8% this fall, it’s only going to get worse. Currently, college

students and recent graduates simply do not have the ability to earn enough money to pay off their debt in a timely fashion. Obama’s hope is that this plan will encourage people to continue their education without being deterred by the extravagant costs.



Obama's plan does a number of things to benefit the students facing this burden. Part of that is the fact he is accelerating a law already passed by Congress last year. That plan was set to go into effect in 2014, but Obama is pushing it up to 2012. This plan will allow students to reduce their monthly payments from 15% of their income, to 10% of their income. Also, any remaining debt will be canceled after 20 years, as opposed to 25 years.

This could save some borrowers several hundred dollars a month in payments. Unfortunately, the plan does not cover private loans, as well as those students who are already in default, but there are extra provisions for military members, teachers, and public service workers. An extra nugget of good news is that this plan will reportedly not cost anything extra for taxpayers.

This plan has some wider significance with the other political issues currently gobbling up headlines. The plan is seen as somewhat of a "gift" to the members of the Occupy Movement. Many of its members are young, frustrated Americans struggling to find jobs and pay off their loans. These

are people who voted for Obama in 2008 with the hopes of reform and change, but they have become disenchanted with the president as he has generally failed to live up to expectations. Obama is now attempting to regenerate their interest and



recapture their votes with this plan.

However, it may not be as effective as he hopes: Opponents of Obama are arguing that the plan does nothing to make college more affordable in the long run, and that the benefits are minimal for most

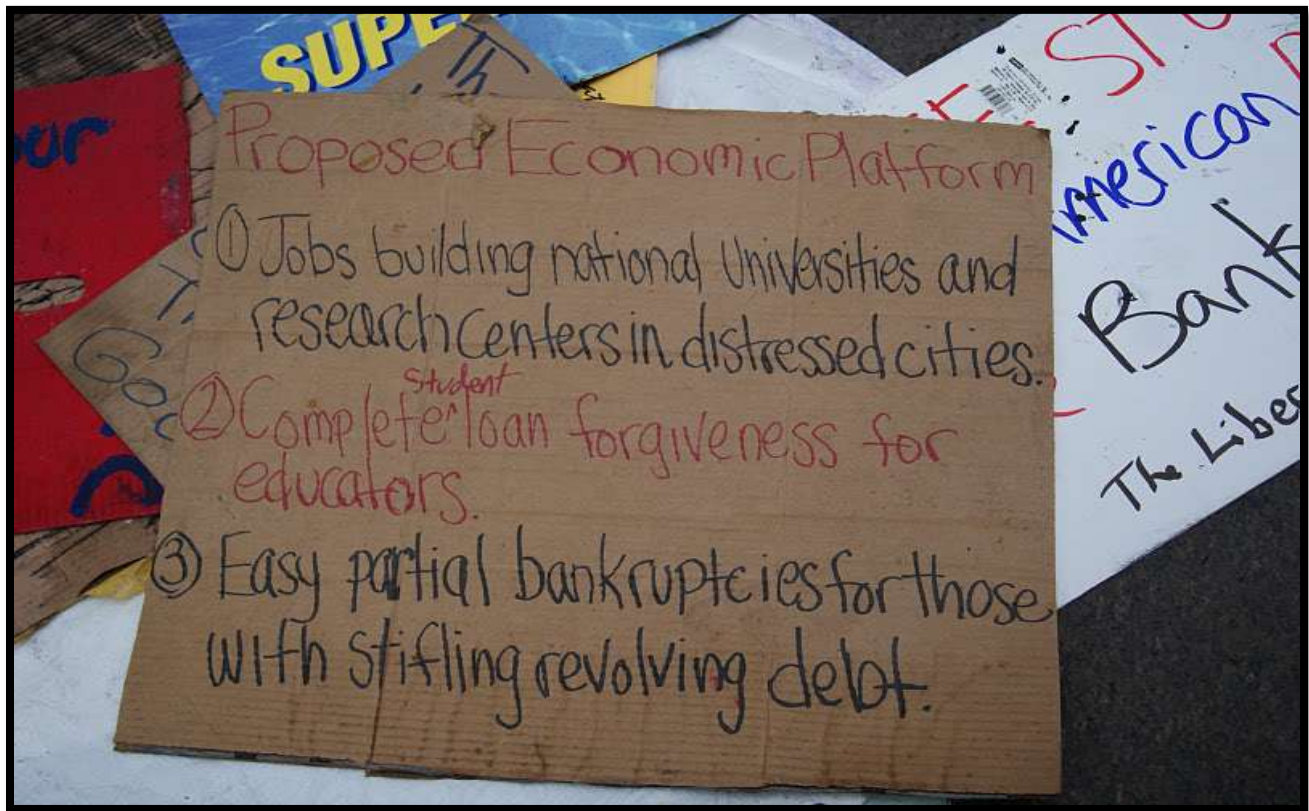
students. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY), ranking Republican on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee declared, "We are left with more questions than answers."

I believe that this plan is more of a campaign tactic and an attempt to placate the Occupy Wall Street protestors than a legitimate undertaking for reform. Although the plan may end up benefitting many students, the timing of the move so close to the upcoming 2012 Presidential Election seems suspicious. Ultimately, the only way to know for sure the effectiveness of the plan is to wait and see.

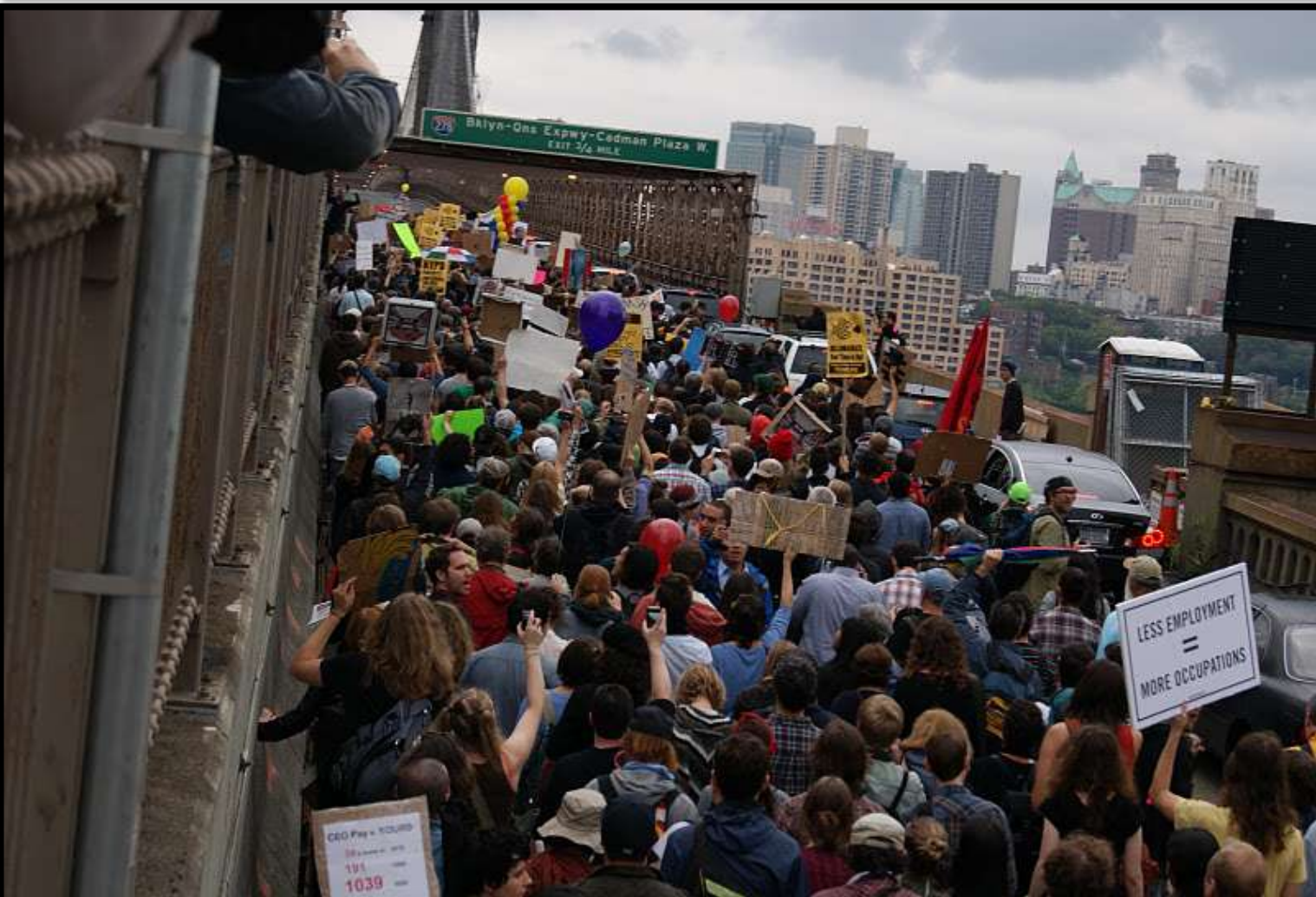
Students Occupy Wall Street

Photos by Quinn Myers, '12 and Miles Steinert, '12















In Memoriam: Jon Huntsman

Henry Burbank, '12

Even if you haven't been following the Republican presidential candidates this year,



chances are you've heard the names Mitt Romney, Rick Perry, and Herman Cain. Romney was a major

Republican contender in 2008 and is currently leading in the polls; Perry is famous for his controversial and occasionally indecipherable statements; and Cain, well, you must have heard about 9-9-9 and his sex scandal. The problem with these three candidates is that while they are liked by the majority of Republicans, none of them are all that qualified to run the country. Sure, Perry ran Texas, but he pretty much ran it into the ground with his infrastructure



and education policies. Then there's Cain, who ran Godfather's Pizza... a *very* clear indication that he can manage the United States. Finally, there's Romney, who can't decide what his opinions are on everything from immigration to health care to Iran. In addition to their qualifications, or lack thereof, the other issue that these three men face is that in a general election with Independents and Democrats, they'll lose. Romney maybe has a shot, but



Perry is viewed as too stupid and Cain is viewed as too inexperienced. If the GOP really wanted to beat President Obama and make him a

one term President, then they should nominate someone who can beat him come November 2012.

The sad thing is there is such a candidate. His name is Jon Huntsman, and he, according to a New York Times study, has the strongest potential to beat Barack Obama in an election. This comes from his extensive executive experience as Governor of Utah and his familiarity with United States Foreign Policy, gained through his roles as Ambassador to Singapore, China, and one of two Deputy Trade Representatives during the Bush Administration. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in



International Politics, speaks fluent Mandarin, and was the Executive Chairman of the Board for a multinational chemical company. He takes the Republican stereotype of an uneducated, inexperienced, and ignorant hillbilly (Palin, Bachmann, Perry, etc.) and proves it completely wrong. This isn't to say however, that he isn't a proper fiscal conservative. Take his stance on taxes. As Governor of Utah he cut \$400 million in taxes through the implementation of \$225 million in tax cuts, the lowering of the top tax rate from 7% to a flat rate of 5%, and the reduction of the state sales tax on food from 4.75% to 1.25%. In addition, his national tax plan has won praise from the Wall Street Journal, who

says that “Mr. Huntsman’s proposal is as impressive as any to date in the GOP Presidential field, and certainly better than what we’ve seen from the front-runners.” Along with cutting taxes, Huntsman is known for being an excellent job creator. Unlike Perry, whose economic policies resulted in low-wage, no-benefit, dead-end jobs for the masses and Romney, who left Massachusetts as one of the worst states in job creation, by the time Huntsman left for China, Forbes ranked Utah as the best state for business and careers. Its economy had expanded three and a half times faster than the US average, it holds the fourth highest employment rating, and household incomes have increased by twice the national average.

So Huntsman gets an A for fiscal conservatism. How about the social side though? Well, he’s a staunch pro-gun and pro-life candidate, passing legislation that expanded Utah residents’ right to carry weapons in their cars, allowed hunters under the age of 12 to kill small game, and made second-trimester abortions illegal and third-trimester abortions a third-degree felony. This is all very good for the twenty-first century Republican Party, but it soon begins to turn

downhill. First, Huntsman has stated numerous times that he believes in evolution and global warming. While to the vast majority of the world these are facts, to an extraordinarily large portion of GOP voters, they are liberal conspiracies. Tack on his serving in the Obama Administration and Huntsman has a serious problem with his red-meat public relations. These gestures however, reinforce his history and his track record as an intelligent human being, and thus gains him credit from Independents and Democrats.

Unfortunately, because of his support of modern science and his service under the Obama Administration, it is extremely unlikely that Huntsman will win the Republican primary. As much as I support him and his policies, it is not accurate to suggest that he will win the nomination. Currently, Huntsman is polling at 2%, the lowest of all candidates, and it’s unlikely that his standing will improve with time. The Republican Party has a qualified, electable candidate in front of them, and it is a disgrace to the Office of the President that we would rather put some flip-flopping, cattle-prodding, pizza-making buffoon in it.



Out of Many, One

Daniel Welch, '12

The House recently reaffirmed “In God We Trust” as our national motto in a vote of three hundred ninety-six to nine (an opposition consisting of eight Democrats and one Republican). While the decision was practically unanimous, it seems to be an issue that deserves further examination and discussion. Our national motto is the phrase we use to define who we are as Americans. It needs to be accurate in its representation of who we are and what we want to be and the motivations behind it must be pure. And in that, “In God We Trust” fails.

A common misconception is that this credo is somehow ingrained into the American conscious. Even if we ignore the even more commonly misconceived notion that America was founded as a Christian nation (John Adams explicitly denied the suggestion in official treaties following the Barbary Wars, while Thomas Jefferson, Adams’ political converse otherwise, wrote his own edition of the Bible that excluded all divine aspects of Christ), the phrase “In God We Trust” is a relatively recent addition to our culture. It was originally added to our petty coinage in 1864 under pressure from the Civil War and was continually removed and re-instated for years (all while drawing the ire of presidents like Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt) until it was officially established as our national motto and printed on all currency in 1956. The U.S. was in the heat

of the Cold War at the time and groups like the Knights of Columbus were launching massive campaigns to instate this Christian motto in place of the one established in 1782, “E Pluribus Unum”. Meaning “Out of Many, One”, this was a phrase that could easily be construed as Communist by anyone who wanted enough for it to be so, which was just about everybody at the time. Claiming that a motto we’ve held for 55 years, less than a quarter of our nation’s existence, is somehow definitive of the essential American experience seems to be an exercise in missing the point, especially

considering the fact that every time it’s pushed ahead we’ve been in exceedingly strenuous circumstances.

“In God We Trust” has no inherent traditional right to be our credo, so any judgment must be based on its merits alone.

The fundamental problem with “In God We Trust” is the undeserved exceptionalism it simply hands

over to Christians in America. It forces every person who wants to use our currency to entrust their purchase in the Christian deity, the nature of which nobody, not even believers, can agree on. If a citizen of the United States does not trust in God they are un-patriotic, even though one has nothing to do with the other. But it is the motto of America; disagreeing with it is as patently un-American as it gets. This notion that an alternative to the mainstream makes one less of a citizen is ridiculous, unfair, and actually un-American. It is selfish on the part of Christians or those of any other belief



system to use their numbers to stamp their personal convictions all over everything in America, just as it is irresponsible of Congress to allow it to happen simply because that particular group is in the majority. They are failing as reasonable, empathetic people and as legislators tasked to uphold the rejection of a state religion, something that is all but officially endorsed with a faith-based motto like this. Out of all the credos our nation

in. It's a ploy. For the past four years, the GOP hasn't really done a whole lot other than grab onto the President's heel and use its corpulence to keep him from going anywhere. President Obama himself criticized the House for debating this issue instead of working on his jobs bill, which they do mainly because passing substantial legislation would mean a victory for a Democratic administration as well as the possibility of an economic



could subscribe to, this is possibly the most immature display of self-denial and spinelessness we could have chosen of ourselves, and the fact that it stood up to a reaffirmation vote in our modern age of supposed reason is seriously disheartening.

The reason it did pass, or was even introduced in the first place, isn't that it is an ideal that our politicians firmly believe

upturn, something that would make this president who they claim is doing such a terrible job at leading our country actually look competent. Politicians haven't fought for Americans in a long time and instead squabble against each other over us. But it's hard to vote in support of nothing, so reaffirming a strong Christian belief as our national motto is a way to remind Christian voters that the Republicans are

on their side in the effort to keep them and their morals in the majority. And it's so brilliant because it creates a threat by implication; a monster made of shadows. Even though their supremacy isn't at any real risk, Christians like to believe that they are the persecuted minority in an increasingly strange and immoral America. There was no way in hell that "In God We Trust" was under attack as our national motto, and the Republicans in the House knew that nobody would be dumb enough or have enough integrity to oppose its reaffirmation if they disagreed with it. But by suggesting that the national motto needs to be restored and fueling the fire by citing a minor incident in India where the president mistakenly cited "E Pluribus Unum" as our national motto, anybody as paranoid as the contemporary Christian Right would see mountains where there were mere molehills and go into defense-mode, historically when they have been at their most dangerous. Anyone who opposed the reaffirmation would be eaten alive. The same goes for anybody who called this charade out as the pointless waste of time it was regardless of their opinion on the matter, as President Obama did. That would be interpreted as him not supporting the motion itself, and thereby lead to even more secret Muslim/atheist accusations. It's impossible for the Republicans to lose, which was the only motive behind any of this when you get past the moral smokescreen. It was an easy, dirty win.

But even if you ignore the religious favoritism and political debauchery that "In God We Trust" carries with it, it also seems like a patently un-American idea. Since the colonies were established, the great American myth has been one of self-reliance. That is, reliance upon the self. We use our own intelligence and strength and skill to solve our problems. Our heroes go it alone, with nothing but determination, a little bit of luck, and their wits about them to meet the challenges they're faced with in the strange lands they find themselves in. Our revolutionaries left their farms and

won their independence with significantly less organization and weaponry than their oppressors. Our settlers had to eat candle wax and leather to survive their journeys into the West, but they made it. Our astronauts rocketed into space and later to the Moon because they trained harder than anyone and had confidence in their ability. Whether these Americans believed in God is one thing; whether they trusted their fates to Him is another. I'd venture that they counted on their coolness and skill to get them through their trials more than anything else.

But there is also an important point here: As much as our spaghetti westerns and pulp novels and science fiction serials support this image of a hard-fought victory won by men of valor, there is a very distinct line between our fiction and our reality. The archetypal heroes we create in our American mythos may not need anybody, but the ones we produce do. Our revolutionaries needed the training and support of the French to defeat the British. Our settlers depended on the unity found in wagon trains to weather the harsh surroundings. Our astronauts were backed up by hundreds of physicists and engineers and technicians. Putting any of these people above the community that contributed to their success makes for a simple shorthand of our achievements, but it's ultimately inaccurate and unfaithful to our spirit if we take it as complete truth. We rely on ourselves, yes, but no man is above the rest. And no man's religion should be either. "E Pluribus Unum", our country's rightful motto, does not mean "Out of Many, One Emerges". No one part of that Many is dominant. That's a gross misinterpretation of the Latin; one that seems more suited for our nation currently, with its strange, frightened, isolated people and their disregard for others. What "E Pluribus Unum" means that we are drawn together by what we all believe in, what matters, and become one united whole. That is something we should trust in before any god.

Fireside Chat and the Funeral Pyre

Jackson Roth, '12

At the height of the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt would come on the radio every now and then to assure the public that things were going to get better. The people responded by electing him to four terms. Can you imagine a leader such as Obama doing that today? Has the office of the Presidency been so degraded by Watergate, lies, greed, incompetence and sex-scandals over the last 40 years that we no longer believe that the President is anything more than a hack politician who cares more about politics and getting re-elected than the American people?

When I watch the Republican Candidates squabble among themselves those questions are all I can think about. Whatever your politics, it should be pretty clear that none of these clowns has any idea how to fix this country. Barely anything is getting accomplished in these debates; it is simply a rehash of the same old conservative talking points. Nothing new is being said, people may gush Herman Cain's "9-9-9" plan but, upon closer examination, it's the same old thing: lower taxes on industry and the rich. Move along, there is nothing new to see here.

The Democrats are almost as bad. In 2008, Ad Age voted Obama's election bid the best marketing campaign of the year. The last three years have shown us that all of the mumbo-jumbo about "hope" and "change" was just that: mumbo-jumbo. Instead we have a bunch of Clinton-era bureaucrats implementing a slightly more liberal version of the policies from second term Bush. Obama's policy aside, why has

he not even tried to be a leader? When one reads about the way men like Lincoln and FDR faced the challenges that the Presidency handed them with courage and, ultimately, were able to overcome those challenges and then compare that to the way Obama has handled his four years one cannot help but want to laugh or cry.

The way things are shaping up, with the economy still in the tank and the Occupy Movement growing every day, it could be an interesting couple of months leading up to the election. The longer the crisis continues, or if for some reason it worsens, the more likely it becomes that this country will have to face the sickening political culture it has created. Maybe America will stop this revolving door of Republicans and Democrats that is choking the life out of any sort of progress. Just maybe.



No We Can't

Michael Whelan, '12

I found it very difficult to write an article for this edition of the *Zeitgeist*. Indeed, it is a tough time for an optimistic, motivated person to stay even a little politically engaged. It seems that no matter where one turns, America is on a one way road to calamity, with the steering wheel locked in place by fickle politicians, a stagnant economy, and an ambivalent electorate. I mourn for 2008, when even the grandest of this nation's problems were met with an emphatic "Yes, we can". Now the most miniscule of issues are left out to dry with the drone-like refrain: "No. We can't".

This plague of pessimism seems to pervade everything from our smallest local governments (We can't put electric wires underground) to issues of national concern (We can't agree on deficit reduction). Indeed, even internationally the prevailing mood points towards a bleak future (We can't repair the Euro zone).

Fittingly, no one can agree on why this mood has swept through the political scene. Many blame the stagnant economy. Others point to a conservative backlash against Obama. Still others chalk it up to a divided Congress. Down the road however, it seems that the economy will emerge as the culprit behind this foul political mood. Transient events like the election of a Democratic president and the division of Congress are never enough on their own induce total dysfunctionality of government. However, a large scale recession can do the trick.

I still tend towards optimism, but there are few positive things this diagnosis tells us. If the recession has caused this change in American political culture, then we cannot expect the mood to shift back to normal until the recession ends. That means no more economic growth packages from Washington, a continued Tea Party fringe movement, and more Occupy finger-pointing. Worst of all it means that this nation continues to deteriorate, as the response more and more often is

No.

We can't.