

ZEITGEIST

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

OBAMA AND THE BUDGET • CONFLICT IN LIBYA AND MORE



CHANGE

Leaders of the Political Awareness Club

President: Quinn Myers '12

Vice President: Jackson Roth '12

Zeitgeist Publisher: Henry Burbank '12

Zeitgeist Editor in Chief: Dan Welch '12

About the Club

Ever feel like your Thursday afternoons are missing something? Perhaps your family has stopped listening to your rants about Ronald Reagan, or your dog is just not having a very good discussion with you whenever you complain about Hillary Clinton? Well, for all of you lonely politicos out there, you're in luck!

Every Thursday, club members - conservative, liberal, and moderate alike - chew over the week's political events, often with the aid of SNL, the Daily Show, the Colbert Report, or some viral video smack off of YouTube.

Over the years the club has sponsored many guest speakers from the world of politics. It has also organized debates involving representatives from various political parties and it has conducted mock elections involving the entire student body.

We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

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The Case for Reforming the Corporate Tax Rate

Jackson Roth, Class of 2012

In his extremely divisive and controversial budget, Representative Paul Ryan made perhaps one excellent suggestion: lower the corporate tax rate. While many liberals, myself included, have bemoaned the fact that corporations aren't paying their fair share of taxes, it has become clear that it may make sense to follow this aspect of Rep. Ryan's plan and, in fact, *lower* them. The reasoning behind this is that current corporate tax code in the United States either stifles businesses, thus forcing them abroad, or is widely abused by larger corporations.

Such a high corporate tax rate has undoubtedly caused jobs to be shipped overseas, particularly in the case of the multi-national corporations that can easily afford to outsource their labor and executives to countries with lower rates. The corporate tax rate in 2010 was around 39% (according to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development), compared to around a 25% average for the industrialized world. Basically, this leaves smaller businesses in the U.S. at a disadvantage

when compared to their European counterparts.

Many larger corporations skirt around these rates by fleeing abroad and exploiting loopholes in the system. Companies like General Electric and IBM pay little to

nothing in taxes while often receiving tremendous benefits from Pentagon research and other government support, all funded by the U.S. taxpayer. These corporations have argued that such a high tax rate has "forced" them abroad and many in the business community seem sympathetic toward their argument. By lowering the rate and closing the loopholes, we could perhaps convince these large corporations it's time to start investing in America again.

By reforming the corporate tax code we

can empower smaller companies and entrepreneurs to innovate and create new industries and jobs while, at the same time, helping to bring back larger corporations from overseas. Hopefully, President Obama will realize how vital this is to our economic recovery and help change this system.



Libya: Right or Wrong?

Owen Gibson, Class of 2013

As with any military intervention involving the U.S. and U.N. in struggling countries, there is much controversy as to whether or not we should be there. The U.S. in particular is often criticized for such efforts, with claims that its motives have more to do with self-interest than foreign protection. The U.S. usually holds a policy of promoting democracy and liberty in all interventions, but some may come to think our key interest is our favorite resource: oil.

Regardless of our country's mixed motives, we must still assess the situation and determine whether our presence is needed or, for that matter, even right.

First off, we have to look at the long term effects. Yes it would be terrible if

Gaddafi was victorious. His people would continue to be oppressed and it would just shatter their hopes of future rebellions. But on the other hand, saving Libya from Gaddafi probably won't fare too well with public opinion either. As we can see from previous efforts (e.g. Iraq), a foreign expeditionary force would only cause Libyans to resent the outside world, effectively strengthening the regime in place.

Another point we must keep in mind is the rebels we are helping. We don't really know who they are and for all we know, they could be even worse than Gaddafi. Similar to how the U.S. supported the Taliban in Afghanistan when trying to expel the Soviets, our current support of these rebels

could just end in a future invasion to stop the new tyrants.

Also, our foreign intervention may not be taken so kindly by the Libyans. Most members of their military are at a neutral stance. We would hope that seeing international aircraft in the skies, they would assume all is lost and join our cause. However, this could easily be stopped by a sense of nationalism and patriotism. Regardless of whether or not they support Gaddafi, the Libyans could always rally around him in an effort to expel this new foreign "threat."



We must realize, however, that the people of Libya need some form of help. Whether it be international groups providing relief to citizens or military actions to remove Gaddafi from power, there is an international responsibility to

help the Libyans. Whether or not the U.S. has the right to take military action (as it has done in so many countries before) is quite controversial. We don't have the right to play "world police" and we have certainly made mistakes with other countries, but we have also had some glorious interventions, such as the liberation of Europe in World War II.

The United States' wish to spread democracy and its stand for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is most admirable. We can only hope that we make the right choice in Libya, and if we decide to take military action, that we do so for the right reasons, reasons which have transformed this country into what it is today.

Obama's Revolving Door

Sean McGuinness, Class of 2011

The transfer of prominent federal officials to the private sector, specifically the section which regularly deals directly with the government, is known as the "revolving door." It is traditionally most active at the mid-point of a presidential administration, and President Obama's Administration has been no exception.

Thus far, Obama has lost: Deputy Press Secretary Bill Burton and White House political adviser Sean Sweeney (to form their own political and strategic consulting firm); National Security Advisor Gen. James L. Jones and Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine, (both resigned); Lawrence H. Summers, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and Christina Romer, director of the National Economic Council, (stepping down to return to academia); Former Communications Director Ellen Moran (now chief of staff at the Commerce Department); National Intelligence Director Dennis C. Blair; and Peter Orszag, former director of the Office of Management and Budget (left to join Citigroup as a vice chairman of global banking).

This "revolving door" poses several problems to the taxpayers and their government. The biggest and most obvious challenge this turnover presents is a conflict of interests, especially for those officials who accepted a government job knowing they would be leaving service after two years. Such officials often take these appointments not out of a desire to serve the people, but because they know that a prominent administration position can be a lucrative career asset. It is from this pre-meditation that ambiguity arises. Whenever they are assigned a task, the officials in question have to choose between acting in the best interests of their country and the benefit of

the employer they either have or will have ties to. The situation is complicated by the fact that the difference between the two positions is often very slight, blurring the ethical line for the policymaker.

The second and closely related problem created by the revolving door comes after an official has left the government. Lobbyists who were once federal officials tend to have an inordinate amount of influence when appealing to their former colleagues. They have knowledge and expertise from their time in government; knowledge and expertise they can trade on and use to get the most out of government for their new employers. Being an effective lobbyist doesn't present a problem in and of itself, but most issues have at least two distinct sides, and one of those sides having former policymakers as representatives gives it a definite advantage. This leads to government doing the most possible good for only a small segment of the population.

This type of loyalty shift by federal officials should not be tolerated, but there is no legal means to stop it. For government to work, it has to be voluntary. You cannot force someone to be in charge of, say, interstate highways, and expect them to do a good job if they have no interest in it. There isn't a way to prevent officials from leaving a job if they so desire. Therefore, if there is a solution to be found, it must be on the other side of the equation: former officials taking jobs where they lobby or otherwise seek to influence policy decisions.

Lobbying as a whole cannot be banned. It is protected under the "right to petition the government for a redress of grievances" clause of the First Amendment. It can be regulated, as shown by the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946 and by the Lobbying and Disclosure Act of 1995, but the government has effectively reached

the limit of how much it can regulate the lobbying industry before it begins to infringe on lobbyists' rights.

There *could* be regulation specifically on former federal officials becoming lobbyists, but then we enter a situation where the cure is worse than the disease; where in order to accept a position within the government, an individual would be forced to surrender, or at least consent to have limitations on, a constitutionally guaranteed right (again, to

petition the government for a redress of grievances).

Therefore, the only course left open to us is to trust our elected officials to do their jobs and act in our best interests. If you believe that seems unlikely with the current establishment, then you have to do your duty to change that. It may be easier not to vote or get involved in politics, but we cannot let the over-regulation of lobbyists, as tantalizing as it sounds, to interfere with the American ideal of freedom for all.



A Budget Plan for the Rich

Charlie Mastoloni, Class of 2013

On April 7th 2011, Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) proposed a massive budget plan that will cut spending by almost 6 trillion dollars over 10 years. At first, one might be inclined to support this plan, as it appears to be a step toward finally bringing the United States out of its current debt crisis. However, behind the veil of these cuts that Republicans claim are necessary is, in fact, a proposal that would only favor the top few percent. Middle and lower class Americans will actually be *harmed* if this plan is approved, as Republicans seek to make major cuts to Medicaid and Medicare well as various other vital programs. In an age where the middle class continues to shrink every year, this is definitely not the right plan.

Foremost, there is a clause in Rep. Ryan's plan that will lower the tax rate from 35% to 25% for individuals in the top few income percentiles. They claim that this will lead to more job creation, which will benefit the economy. However, during the 8 years that George W. Bush applied the trickle-down theory, it resulted in the loss of over 600,000 jobs in the private sector as well as our deficit skyrocketing. Not only that, but to fund these tax-cuts, they plan on re-appropriating funds from programs such as Pell Grants, Head Start, Planned Parenthood and community health centers.

Here is an idea of what Representative Ryan is asking us to give up: Pell Grants are given out by the government to struggling middle and lower class American families to assist

them in sending their children to college. Head Start is an organization that educates lower-class parents on how to raise their children. Both of these programs are meant to provide our kids with the proper start they need to become successful later on in life. Personally, thousands of kids who will no longer being able to receive an adequate education does not seem like the right thing to do, or a good way to improve the economy in the long-term. By introducing this bill and proposing cuts for these

programs, Republicans are saying that money that could be used to create educated and well-adjusted contributors to society would be put to better use giving tax breaks to the already über-rich.

And this is nowhere near where they are stopping. Republicans also want to reduce the budget for community health care centers that millions of Americans depend on when they

can't afford to see a doctor. Under this budget proposal, thousands of these community centers would be forced to close. This could have potentially catastrophic effects, as people who are sick will have nowhere to be treated. Eventually, an un-treated common cold could turn in pneumonia, and the individual who could easily have been cared for in a community health center will end up in the emergency room and perhaps even die because they had nowhere to go. As we saw with the swine-flu scare, public health centers are necessary not only to save individual lives, but also to ensure that diseases will not go unchecked and spread. It is simply unacceptable that this budget plan is



jeopardizing lives by closing these health centers. Republicans are clearly going after the most vulnerable people here: the poor, the elderly, and children. This is made even clearer by the other plans that have been included in the proposal. Ryan's plan calls for the immediate overhaul of the Medicare system, essentially ending it as we know it.

What he proposes is that we give vouchers of various sums of money to each person to give to private insurance companies. If you look at the situation closely, you will see that the Republicans are not only eliminating these health centers to fund the wealthy, but in doing so, are also sending even more money to the private insurance industry by forcibly creating more clientele. While the rich are continually getting richer, the poor are suffering because their coverage is left uncertain. What happens if those vouchers run out? Will they just be left to die?

More or less, the Republicans are limiting the amount in the vouchers, potentially costing thousands of lives. Also, by giving these vouchers to private insurance companies, elderly people will be at the mercy of these companies, whose main goal is to make a profit wherever they can. Most importantly, it negates the guaranteed benefits seniors currently have under Medicare. As a business, they are going to try to get the most money they can out of these people.

That is not the only proposal though. Another clause inside this bill is slowly

raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. We cannot afford to do this to our hard-working people. Another two years on the job is another two years during which it becomes more likely for a worker to be seriously injured. For some people, it could mean having to deal with an avoidable disability for the rest of their lives. In some

cases, people lose 5 years of life expectancy working two more years at a strenuous job, all in order to get the Medicare benefit. This will, by far, cause the most problems for those who depend on Medicare to take care of them when they are seniors: once again, the lower classes. Before Medicare, 50% of seniors were in poverty and now only about 15% are. We cannot force seniors to go into debt to pay for millionaires.

Medicaid is also in the Republicans' sights. This is yet another successful, life-saving program that they have tried to do away with for decades now, and this budget plan, if passed, would

essentially spell its end. What the Republicans have proposed to do is create a block grant program that makes each state responsible for covering the people who previously benefitted from Medicaid. An example of how catastrophic this plan could be is Massachusetts: The proposed conversion of Medicaid into a block grant program would cut some \$36.3 billion from Massachusetts over ten years and force 29,921 beneficiaries out of the program, whose costs are split between the state and federal government. Now adjust that number for all 50 states and you see that millions of people can no longer get



benefits from the government to take care of their health. If we switched to this system, we would have a situation similar to the one in Arizona, where people are waiting in line for transplants, many of whom cannot afford it. We cannot allow people who work two jobs just to bring in around \$20,000 or lower to go uninsured, especially with where the money is going.

So, now we are left with two options: support a bill that favors the rich and takes extremely important benefits from the most vulnerable people, or vote against making the rich richer and help to keep the programs that make this country stable. This country is dependent on the lower and middle classes, but this fact has been disregarded during the 8 years during which President Bush and the Republicans held power. 3/4ths of the top 1 percent of people, in terms of total wealth, account for about 23% of all income earned in this country. The top 5 percent of people in terms of wealth in this country make more than the bottom 90. That does not sound

like a democracy to me. That sounds like an oligarchy. Does a democracy cut these programs while CEOs on Wall Street sit on 2 trillion dollars kept in tax havens overseas? Does a democracy allow companies like G.E and Exxon Mobil, who raked in billions in profit last year, to pay a total of 0 dollars to this government, when in that same year the average person paid taxes on their modest \$40,000 jobs? Does a democracy grant Bank of America, JP Morgan, Wells Fargo, and Citigroup, the four most powerful banks in the U.S., millions and billions in tax rebates while they foreclose on the houses of the very citizens who were forced to bail them out? That is not a fair and equal nation. That is a nation for the rich.

In conclusion, I would like to say that before giving tax breaks to the rich and cutting programs for the lower classes, we should consider making corporations pay their taxes, or perhaps even establishing surtax on millionaires. That is why I do not support this budget: it only favors the wealthy when the sacrifice should be across the board.



Geography, Demography, and Ideology: The Republicans' Achilles' Heel

Michael Whelan, Class of 2012

Texas. Liberals see it as a crazed conservative fiefdom where nearly everything they hate thrives with vigor.

Conservatives see it as a bulwark of their ideals, a linchpin in any electoral victory at the national level. It's a place where teachers can bring handguns to school, where more executions occur than any other state, where evolution is

kept out of textbooks. Simply put, Texas is among the reddest of red states. Yet in an analysis of the recently-released census results, it seems as if this state and its Southwestern peers are turning a more purple hue.

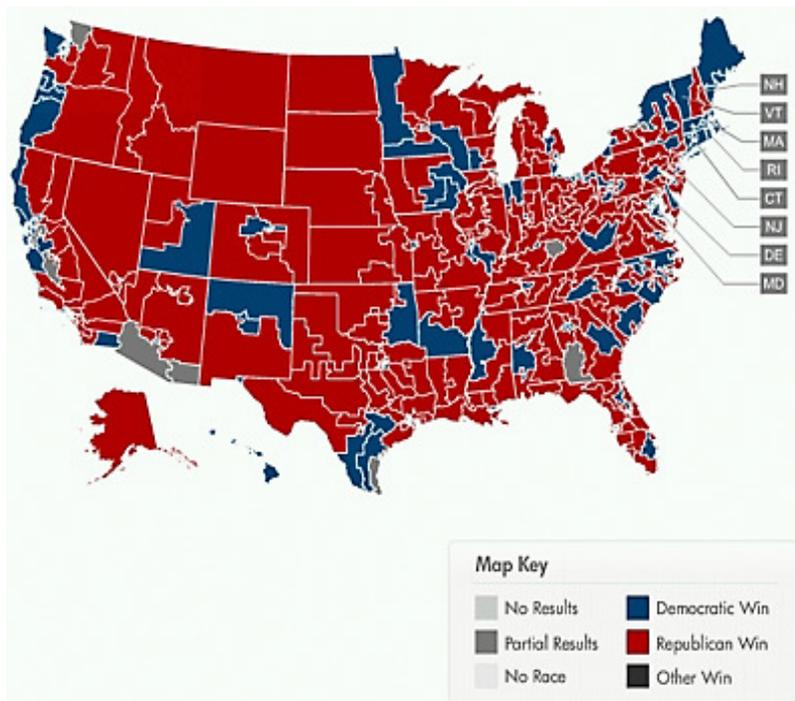
Like most of the Sun Belt, Texas' population continued to skyrocket in the 2010 Census. In fact, it led the nation as the only state to gain four congressional seats. Florida was the runner up, with two seats added, while Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington all gained one seat.

Every one of these states (except for Washington) is considered solidly

Republican. When a Republican sees these results, he smiles, congratulates his colleagues and pats them on the back: a seat gained in conservative Utah is a seat lost in liberal Illinois. This population shift to more conservative Southern and Western states has been happening for

several decades and, up to this point, has immensely benefitted Republicans.

Yet, it would be unwise (although hardly unusual) for Republicans to take these results at face value. When you take a closer look, you see that the growth in the Southwest was overwhelmingly among Hispanics. In Arizona and Nevada they accounted for half of the population increase. In Florida it was 55%. The growth behind those four Texan seats was 65% Latino, proving that everything is, in fact, bigger in Texas.



These statistics paint a dismal picture for the GOP when combined with another recent trend: Hispanics are voting for Democrats more and more. In 2000, Bush won 49% of the Hispanic vote. In 2004, it dropped to 40%. In 2008, only 31% voted for McCain, with 67% in favor of Obama. Furthermore, the Latino vote was a key factor in the Democrats' retaking of Congress in 2006. If this trend continues and the Hispanic population continues to increase, Texas could become just as much a swing state as Ohio or Florida.

Why do these trends continue? For one thing, Latino immigrants often come from oppressive regimes, and thus favor small government. True, most are Catholic and prefer the GOP's stance on social issues, but those issues play second fiddle to the one that Hispanics often have the most personal experience with: Immigration. A recent survey conducted by LatinoMetrics found that, "since the end of 2009, immigration has catapulted to the top issue of personal concern among 1 in 4 Latinos—tied with jobs and the economy."

But the Democrats do not offer meaningful solutions to the immigration problem either. President Obama, who promised reform during his campaign, has been lackluster on the issue. The DREAM Act (a bill that would naturalize educated immigrants who came here illegally as children) was the only major piece of immigration legislation proposed under the Democratic 111th Congress and it did not even address large-scale reform. This means that Hispanics are flocking to the Democrats not because they are

proactive on immigration reform, but rather because they are not Republicans. Given recent events, this attitude is understandable.

Hispanics feel threatened by the recent tack to the right on this issue by Republicans. New laws to combat illegal immigration in Arizona and Georgia have been widely disparaged as discriminatory. Just before the end of the previous Congress, the DREAM Act was filibustered by Republican Senators. The immigration debate, at least within the Republican Party, has shifted rightward.



In the LatinoMetrics poll mentioned above, most respondents said that recent attempts to crackdown are the result of "racism and prejudice against Latinos." Republicans should be very alarmed by this sentiment among the fastest growing segment of the electorate. Yet they are not. They appear to believe that simply fielding candidates with Spanish names is enough to capture the Hispanic vote, i.e. Susana Martinez in New Mexico, or Brian Sandoval in Nevada. But neither of those governors won a majority of the Hispanic vote.

A politician's name is not as important as the name of his party, and for the moment "Republican" is synonymous with "anti-immigrant". Until that perception changes, a growing minority will continue to abandon the Republicans. Immigration is the GOP's Achilles' heel, and it could cost them Congress and the presidency for years into the future. When the next election comes around, don't be surprised if Obama starts campaigning in Texas.

Change We Can Believe In?

Quinn Myers, Class of 2012

Shortly after the 2008 Presidential election, then President-elect Barack Obama appeared on 60 Minutes, telling interviewer Steve Kroft, *"...I have said repeatedly that America doesn't torture. And I'm gonna make sure that we don't torture. Those are part and parcel of an effort to regain America's moral stature in the world."* For many Americans, this statement was welcomed as a sign of the change promised by Mr. Obama

during his campaign. For the past eight years, The Bush Administration and several government agencies had approved and overseen the use of several torture techniques meant to be used on supposed terrorists and prisoners of

war, most of whom were being held at Guantanamo Bay and other US prisons around the world. These torture methods included sleep deprivation, cramped confinement, and waterboarding. While many Bush officials, including former Vice President Dick Cheney, claim that no "real" torture occurred, it has been widely acknowledged by the Obama Administration and the rest of the world that these horrible crimes of war did indeed take place. The torture authorized by Bush and his cabinet stand as an ugly symbol of America in the first eight years of the 21st century. However, most Americans, including myself, believed that with Barack

Obama in office, the crimes against humanity would end. Unfortunately for the United States and the rest of the world, we thought wrong.

In May 2010, federal officials arrested twenty two year old PFC Bradley Manning, an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army. Manning is suspected of relaying classified video and hundreds of thousands of documents to Wikileaks, the now infamous online whistleblower. In March 2011, he was

charged with 22 separate crimes, including, "aiding the enemy". Many established legal scholars and political activists, who see the imprisonment of Manning as a political ploy by the United States government, have called these charges



into question. Regardless, the fact remains that as of April 2011, almost a year after his arrest, Private Manning has not been convicted of leaking the classified information, or any other crime for that matter. However, Manning has faced inhumanly cruel treatment in the months he has spent in Quantico, Virginia, where he has been held for the past seven months. Since his arrival at Quantico, Manning has spent 23 hours of every day in solitary confinement, unable to exercise, and under 24 hour surveillance. He was put on suicide watch in January, despite having given no warnings of self-injury. Because of this restriction, his sheets and pillow have been

removed from his bed. He is also asked if he is "okay," every five minutes by a guard. This alone would drive someone insane, and of course, it gets worse.

In late February, Manning's lawyer reported on his blog that Bradley is now stripped of his clothing every night, left naked for seven hours, and then forced to stand in front of the entire brig, nude. Not only is this a despicable way to treat a human being, but it is also a breach of The Geneva

Conventions. Prison officials claim that these treatments are in the safety interests of Private Manning, but it's safe to say that these treatments are being used for two reasons: sheer embarrassment for the sake of revenge and mental destruction. The Obama administration is taking out its frustration from the Wikileaks "incident" on the only person they can: Bradley Manning.

The Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution reads, "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, **nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.**" Yet here we are, halfway through the first term of the "President of Change", and cruel and unusual punishment is occurring right under our noses. Now, up to this point in the article, I've avoided calling the treatment of PFC Manning torture. Many have made the argument that because he is not physically being harmed, this is all above the board.

However, many experts are labeling Manning a victim of "no-touch" torture, otherwise known as Enhanced Interrogation Techniques. These techniques, the same adopted by the C.I.A and the Bush Administration, are carefully designed to destroy the willpower and hope of prisoners. This is precisely what is happening to Bradley Manning, and it most certainly constitutes as torture.

The Era of Change is over. Obama has taken

a dramatic shift to the right, and with him he took the courage of the Democratic Party. A few truly progressive politicians remain, but it's going to take hundreds if we truly wish to end torture and restore the validity of the United States. The fact that Bradley Manning is being tortured should enrage every American, regardless of where they lie on the political spectrum. Let's bring morality back into politics. Let's actually get away from our computer screens and interact in the



world, and stand up for what's right. Already, there is a movement led by Veterans For Peace to free Private Manning. But even if you think he should be in jail, ask yourself: does he really deserve such humiliation and mental deprivation? And one last message to President Obama. Silence is consent. If you really wish to instill "Hope We Can Believe In," then you'll do the right thing and put an end to torture in U.S. prisons around the world.

The Death of the Celtic Tiger

Brian Bennett, Class of 2011

Ireland has beautiful green fields, usually covered in rain. The pubs are filled with fantastic, cheery sing-alongs, sung-along by a population poisoned by alcoholism. Ireland cheated these paradoxes for a decade known as the Celtic Tiger, when it became a financial and real-estate powerhouse and its Diaspora reversed itself.

Corporate tax breaks first drew in companies run by Irish descendants, then foreigners, often Germans, with no Irish ties. The perceived value of Irish land skyrocketed. The nation drew invisible lines all over itself and sold the intersections for incredible sums. Plumbers and butchers could afford vacation homes in France because banks saw each citizen not as a client but as a brother, whose need for a loan was understood rather than cynically reviewed. Pride and cooperation were the ruling virtues after centuries of division.

Optimism was not only a feeling but an economic policy. The optimists were so pessimistic, they were certain that without optimism there would be an economic meltdown. Someone asking for a more regulated loan system would be shooed away like a fly disturbing a sleeping man from a nice dream. And the government will pay for the mistake of the banks: €78 billion in debt to foreign investors, soon to be €156 billion.

Around the countryside, there are enormous new manors sitting unoccupied. There are

dirt holes which people stopped digging four years ago, surrounded by bulldozers that may belong in museums before they will be used again. Conservatively, 29 property developers and constructions workers have committed suicide since the real estate immolation. These are egoistic suicides, the symptom of an individual's isolation from the society he lives in. If the Celtic Tiger was a collective effort of Irish buying each other's property and bound by optimism, the present is a period of loneliness and separation. The money and the pride are gone, and the nation will be listless and alone without it.



Through the government's stupidity, the banks' enthusiasm for each citizen's affluence, and the people's own naïveté, the Irish people have had a burden placed on their backs that has crushed the Celtic Tiger mentality. Ireland lives with a debt will disable its financial prosperity

for decades. Without the possibility of prosperity or a favorable international reputation, Ireland will not regain the optimism that it briefly possessed during the Celtic Tiger Period. The coming decade will stand alongside the Great Potato Famine as a period of Diaspora and powerlessness. The Irish have quietly accepted the government's decision, with only a few of the protests that such a colorful and passionate people should produce. For all their pride and patriotism, in Ireland the rich are always rich and the poor are always poor. Neither lions nor tigers nor bears will change that.

This essay owes its soul to Michael Lewis' "When Irish Eyes are Crying", which appeared in Vanity Fair Magazine in March 2011. http://www.finfacts.ie/irishfinancenews/article_1015516.shtml

Religious Expression Threatened in France

By Henry Burbank Class of 2012

On April 12, France's controversial "burqa banning" law went into effect. In short, the law prohibits women from wearing the *burqa* (full body covering) or the *niqab* (full facial covering) in public. If women violate the law, they can face fines and requirements to take citizenship tests. If men are found to have forced their wives to wear the coverings, they can face up to a year in prison and a fine of up to 30,000 Euros (about \$43,000).

Don't get me wrong, I think that the idea of fining/imprisoning the men is a good idea. Women have been mistreated by fundamentalist Muslim men for too long and countries should do what they can

to protect the women from their husbands if that is the case. In my opinion however, the ban of the coverings as a whole is very wrong. If it is the women's decision to wear it, then that should be respected. The law does not preserve French culture, as supporters of the law claim, but it does heavily infringe on Islamic tradition and civil liberties.

The coverings are the Islamic equivalent of the Jewish *Yakama*, and should be treated as such. They are not sinister and they are not signs of the decline of French culture; they are just a method of religious expression. It is essentially like banning Christians from wearing the crucifix around their necks. Those that wear the veils



voluntarily are doing so because they believe that it is their duty to God to do so, and the French government has no authority to infringe upon those rights.

One of the things that this law brings up, though, is the issue of nationalities in Europe. During the '60s and '70s, many Muslims emigrated from their home countries to European ones. The United Kingdom, France and Germany received huge influxes of Muslims, for example. The

issue that this presented was that when these FOB (Fresh-off-the-Boat) people had kids, the kids were not Saudi, or Egyptian, or Moroccan, or Syrian. They were British, or French, or German. They grew up in these European countries, they

spoke the European languages, and they were positive contributors to these European societies. However, the governments of these countries mandated that these people choose between their nationalities and the Islamic beliefs and traditions they had been raised with. As a result, Muslims have been ostracized in many European communities, and have fell victim to fundamentalist teachings.

Examples of this can be found in the 7/7 Bombers in the UK and the seven, possibly eight, 9/11 conspirators that were organized out of a terrorist cell in Hamburg, Germany. The issue that this veil ban presents is that it contributes to the animosity felt by these people towards their European countries, and thus has great potential to be

counterproductive in its goal to make Islam more moderate.

Despite all of the faults with this law, the majority of the French people support it, and I guess that means that we should just let them go along with it and mind their own business. On the other hand, the

Muslim population makes up about 9% of the population, and even though not all of them wear the *burqa* or the *niqab*, it doesn't mean that their rights shouldn't matter. And yes, there were people wearing the veils and protesting on the 12th. They, however, were arrested. Why? No, not for wearing the veils, but for protesting the existence of the law.

Terrapower

Miles Steinert, Class of 2012

With the recent nuclear power issues in Japan, the energy source now falls into debate. Some are saying that nuclear reactors are too dangerous and that alternatives need to be considered. A newly conceived form of nuclear power, vastly different from the one currently used, seems to be the solution to both the safety and renewable energy problems. This innovation, largely backed by Bill Gates, is called "Terrapower".

Gates spoke about Terrapower at the TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) conference in a lecture titled, "Innovating to Zero". He explained, "Today, you're always refueling the reactor, so you have lots of

people and lots of controls that can go wrong, that thing where you're opening it up and moving things in and out. That's not good. So, if you have very cheap fuel that you can put 60 years in - just think of it as a log - put it down and not have those same complexities. And it just sits there and burns for the sixty years, and then it's done."



So how does Terrapower work? It came out of the idea that instead of burning only 1% of nuclear fuel (U-235), which is the process now, we burn the other 99% (U-238). The great thing about this new idea is that we can use the other 99% which we already have as waste from our current nuclear power facilities.

(On the left is a picture of where this waste is kept.)

The system that is used to burn this fuel is called a "traveling wave reactor". Basically, the fuel is ignited in the reactor where it can burn securely for decades in a vertical column built deep into the ground. Microsoft chief technology officer

Nathan Myhrvold explains the role of computers in this system: "Extensive computer simulations and engineering studies produced new evidence that a wave of fission moving slowly through a fuel core could generate a billion watts of electricity continuously for well over 50 to 100 years without enrichment or reprocessing. The hi-fidelity results made

possible by advanced computational abilities of modern supercomputer clusters are the driving force behind one of the most active nuclear reactor design teams in the country.”

With our mainstream energy sources expelling carbon into the atmosphere we get this diagram on the left. Gates states, “Now the exact amount of how you map from a certain increase of CO₂ to what temperature will be... there is some uncertainty there, but not very much. I

asked the top scientists several times, do we really need to get [carbon emissions] down to zero? Can't we just cut it in half or a quarter? And the answer is that until we get near to zero the temperature will continue to rise.”

Without having to elaborate on statistics about pollution, the fact remains that we must get to CO₂-free forms of energy. And to me, and clearly to Bill Gates, Terrapower seems to be one of the best solutions to that problem.

