

## MICHIGAN CHRONICLE

A Real Times Newspaper

479 Ledyard – Detroit, MI 48201

(313) 963-5522

Fax 963-8788

e-mail:chronicle4@aol.com

SAMUEL LOGAN  
PublisherJACKIE BERG  
Chief Marketing OfficerBANKOLE THOMPSON  
Senior EditorCORNELIUS A. FORTUNE  
Managing EditorJOHN H. SENGSTACKE  
Chairman-Emeritus 1912-1997LONGWORTH M. QUINN  
Publisher-Emeritus 1909-1989

October 12-18, 2011

Page B-4

## Buses must run on schedule

Detroit may be the Motor City, but that does not mean it is acceptable for buses to show up hours late, if at all. Not everyone drives, or can afford a car, which makes the bus the only way some people can get to work or school.

There has been a myriad of complaints from people who have repeatedly been late for work or school. The employment of some is in jeopardy due to this deplorable situation.

Blame is being passed around for the pitiable state of Detroit's bus system. According to reports, city officials claim mechanics are at fault, while Local 312 President Leamon Wilson has suggested the city did not take into account how to adjust service schedules to deal with 20 laid off and 35 retired mechanics in the last two years.

For the average Detroit, the blame game is pointless. John and Jane Q. Citizen just want quality, on-time bus service. One day, Southeast Michigan might have a much-needed regional mass transit system, but the roughly 30 percent of Detroiters who do not have cars cannot wait that long.

It is also in the city's best interest to have a reliable bus system. If people without cars can't get to work via the bus, they might not be able to keep their jobs. And if they're not working, they're not contributing to Detroit's tax base. The more people who are working and paying taxes, the sooner the city can chop away at its \$183 million deficit. Therefore, having a reliable bus system should be a priority.

Mayor Bing needs to be directly involved in whatever discussions or nego-

**"F**or the average Detroit, the blame game is pointless. John and Jane Q. Citizen just want quality, on-time bus service. One day, Southeast Michigan might have a much-needed regional mass transit system, but the roughly 30 percent of Detroiters who do not have cars cannot wait that long."

tiations are necessary to fix this problem. The buck, to paraphrase what a sign on President Truman's desk once read, stops with the mayor. He and the City Council need to do whatever is necessary to get things moving.

All sides need to make a good-faith effort to get the buses rolling on a timely basis. In the long and short run, the city as a whole will benefit.

## Civil War Sesquicentennial

This year marked the beginning of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War.

Fifty years ago, the 100th anniversary commemoration — known as the "Civil War Centennial" — was marred by historical inaccuracy. The fundamental cause of the war, human chattel slavery, was downplayed in the interest of national harmony and sectional reconciliation. Mainstream attention ignored the unequal civil status of non-whites. The anticlimactic end of the Centennial in 1965 was directly due to its failure to deal with reality, the reality of the 1860s, and the reality of the 1960s in America.

The 150th commemoration — what is called the Civil War Sesquicentennial — can be different. It can educate the public on what the Civil War was really about, and it can deliver an authentic recounting that engages all elements of our population.

Dr. King called for this kind of appropriate commemoration in a 1962 speech celebrating the centennial of the war measure that began to deal a death-blow to slavery:

"The Emancipation Proclamation shattered in one blow the slave system, undermining the foundations of the economy of the rebellious South; and guaranteed that no slave-holding class, if permitted to exist in defeat, could prepare a new and deadlier war after resuscitation.

"The Proclamation opened the door to self-liberation by the Negro upon which he immediately acted by desert-

ing the plantations in the South and joining the Union armies in the North. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, seeing a regiment of Negroes march through Beacon Street in Boston, wrote in his diary, "An imposing sight, with something wild and strange about it, like a dream. At last the North consents to let the Negro fight for freedom." Beyond the war years the grim and tortured struggle of Negroes to win their own freedom is an epic of battle against frightful odds. If we have failed to do enough, it was not the will for freedom that was weak, but the forces against us which were too strong.

"We have spelled out a balance sheet of the Emancipation Proclamation, its contributions and its deficiencies which our lack of zeal permitted to find expression. There is but one way to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation. That is to make its declarations of freedom real; to reach back to the origins of our nation when our message of equality electrified an unfree world, and reaffirm democracy by deeds as bold and daring as the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation."

The Civil War Centennial did not heed Dr. King's words. It missed a prime opportunity to create powerful linkages with the Civil Rights movement and be relevant to all of America.

Michigan's Civil War Sesquicentennial should make us all proud by including the history of "self-liberation" within the commemoration. It should not repeat the travesties and errors of the 1960's.

## Wall Street couldn't have done it alone

By Sheldon Richman

To Occupy Wall Street:

Wall Street couldn't have done it alone. It takes a government and/or its central bank, the Federal Reserve System, to:

- Create barriers to entry for the purpose of sheltering existing banks from competition and radical innovation, then "regulate" for the benefit of the privileged industry;

- Issue artificially cheap, economy-distorting credit in order to, among other things, give banks incentives to make shaky but profitable mortgage loans (and also to grease the war machine through deficit spending);

- Make it lucrative for banks — and their bonus-collecting executives — to bundle thousands of shaky mortgages into securities and other derivatives with the knowledge that government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and other companies, all subject to powerful congressmen looking for campaign contributions, will buy them after a government-licensed rating cartel scores them AAA;

- Inflate an unsustainable housing bubble by the foregoing and other methods, enticing people to foolishly overinvest in real estate.

- Work closely with lending companies to establish a variety of programs de-

signed to lure people with few resources or bad credit into buying houses they can't afford;

- Attract workers to the home-construction bubble, setting them up for long-term unemployment when the bubble inevitably bursts;

- Implicitly guarantee big financial companies and/or their creditors that if they get into trouble they will be rescued;

- Compel the taxpayers to bail out those companies and/or creditors when the roof finally falls in.

No bank or group of banks could do these things on its own in a freed market. It takes a government-Wall Street partnership — the corporate state — to create such misery and exploitation.

So demonstrators, you are right. Something is dreadfully wrong. But your list of culprits is far from complete. So go ahead and protest outside Goldman Sachs and Bank of America. But also spend some time outside the White House, the Fed, the Treasury, and the Capitol Building. Together they are responsible for our current economic woes.

These are the entities that control our fate and over which we have no real say. It's time for things to change. Greed without political power is boorish. Greed with political power is dangerous.



## The era of the one percent

By Eric Alterman

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the tactics of the Occupy Wall Street movement, it's easy to understand the inspiration for its anger as well as its impatience.

"Historical movements," the historian Mary Jo Buhle rightly notes, "are rarely judged solely in the light they cast themselves." In that sense it is a decidedly risky business to try to draw too many hard and fast conclusions about the present moment in history. Even so, I think the Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz was as accurate as anyone is likely to be when he pronounced our age — and our government — to be one "of the one percent, by the one percent, for the one percent."

Think about it: In 1974 the top 0.1 percent of American families enjoyed 2.7 percent of all income in the country. By 2007 this same tiny slice of the population had increased its holdings to fully 12.3 percent—roughly five times as great a piece of the pie as it had enjoyed just three decades earlier. Half the U.S. population owns barely 2 percent of its wealth, putting the United States near Rwanda and Uganda and below such nations as pre-Arab Spring Tunisia and Egypt when measured by degrees of income inequality.

Over one in five American children is living in poverty, and the number is rising. By the end of 2010, corporate profits rose by fully 15 percent of the economic pie—their biggest share of the economy since such statistics became available nearly 70 years earlier—while the share going to workers' wages dropped to their lowest level in the same period and fell below 50 percent of national income for the first time.

It's difficult, however, to imagine a time in our politics when our system is so unbalanced in this direction. According to the political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, for instance, the number of political action committees grew from under 300 in 1976 to nearly 5,000 by 2010. The degree of funds these PACs control and direct toward politicians of both parties on issues of concern has the power to overcome almost any group of voters who attempt to organize themselves in opposition.

Americans have always evinced some distrust of government, but the current situation has exacerbated this to a degree that may be unprecedented. A CNN/ORC International poll published on Wednesday found that fewer than one in seven Americans questioned trusted the government "to do what's right almost always or most of the time," an all-time low since University of Michigan pollsters began asking the question in 1958. This was approximately the same anemic percentage of those questioned who, in a previous poll taken last year (subscription required), expressed confidence in the government's "ability to stand up to vested interests."

A related problem is a lack of trust in elites: Citizens do not believe that the programs politicians propose will last or make any difference if they do last, and they do not vote in their own interests because all they see are the likely costs.

The governing style of the Obama administration only reinforced these be-

liefs. As the Democratic pollster and political scientist Stanley Greenberg wrote in July 2011:

The government saved irresponsible executives who bankrupted their own companies, hurt many people and threatened the welfare of the country. When Mr. Obama championed the bailout of the auto companies and allowed senior executives at bailed-out companies to take bonuses, voters concluded that he was part of the operating elite consensus.

Never have liberals needed to stand up stronger on behalf of their constituency. But the fact remains that on the economic front, they find themselves on the defensive in virtually every respect. Liberalism, much like President Obama at the outset of his presidency, was torn between commitments to preserve the necessary civility in political life and a desire to pursue substantive values of justice and equity. Based on the success conservatives have enjoyed with arguments like "death panels," "socialism," and "Sharia law" (to say nothing of the near default of the U. S. government) the president has succeeded in neither respect.

Today liberalism has pledged itself to rationality in a culture in which the anti-intellectualism initially identified by the historian Richard Hofstadter has run rampant across the entire political culture. Its practice, the philosopher Michael Walzer observed, "is a hard politics because it offers so few emotional rewards; the liberal state is not a home for its citizens; it lacks warmth and intimacy."

Lacking universal foundations — Lionel Trilling termed it "a large tendency rather than a concise body of doctrine" — liberalism can offer only narratives of sacrifice and common purpose, ones that can easily be trumped by the tales of the right, which frequently combine libertarianism with jingoism, fearmongering, and other easily pushed emotional buttons that tend to drown out the more idealistic homilies that liberals put forth.

As Hofstadter feared nearly 60 years ago, "In a populistic culture like ours, which seems to lack a responsible elite with political and moral autonomy, and in which it is possible to exploit the wildest currents of public sentiment for private purposes," it would be "at least conceivable that a highly organized, vocal, active, and well-financed minority could create a political climate in which the rational pursuit of our well-being and safety would become impossible."

"We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few," the great liberal jurist Louis Brandeis prophesied in the second decade of the 20th century. "But we can't have both."

Conservatives have made their choice. It's long past time for liberals to make theirs.

Eric Alterman is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and a Distinguished Professor of English at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. He is also a columnist for *The Nation*, *The Forward*, and *The Daily Beast*. His newest book is *"Kabuki Democracy: The System vs. Barack Obama."*

## Black educator tackles Gov. Jindal's call for Obama to be fired

By Huel D. Perkins

How dare Gov. Jindal call for the firing of President Obama when his administration leaves a great deal to be desired (Advocate, Sunday, Sept. 18). Louisiana continues to head up all the "worst" lists and comes in last in all of the "best" lists. He goes on to say that the presidency is not a place for "on-the-job" training. I don't remember him going to school to become governor. President Obama was an organizer. And as our Biblical history informs us, Pontius Pilate was a governor. Jesus was an organizer.

May I suggest that the governor get his own house in order before attacking the president? Consider the following:

Louisiana ranks 49th in the preparation of its pre-college population.

Louisiana has one of the highest dropout rates of high schoolers in the country.

Louisiana loses thousands of its college-trained citizens to other states.

Louisiana is the third most violent state in the nation.

Louisiana has some 800,000 children who depend upon food banks for daily sustenance.

Louisiana has lost almost 18,000 state jobs in the last several years.

Poverty continues to escalate in Louisiana (Advocate, Sept. 25).

And these are just a few of the problems which should be addressed.

I see the governor's statement as political posturing — attempting to hitch his wagon to the "star" of his party, hoping to be rewarded for his outrageous attacks on the president

I have been a resident of this state for 86 years. I have paid my taxes dutifully. I am also a US Navy veteran, having served in World War II. I have more than a passing interest in what transpires in my state and my nation.

One last thought: If former governor Edwin Edwards were eligible to run for the governorship, he would win by a landslide.

Finally, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."