

Build-a-Cocoon

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Body

I try to explain, somewhat unconvincingly, [why I find investment banker, Pinchbuddy, and NYT Sacred Cow Steven Rattner so annoying](#).** Rattner's recent WSJ [op-ed on income inequality](#) offers a good example of one reason. Rattner calls growing income inequality the "mother of all electoral issues," especially because

[f]rom 2000 to 2005, for example, average weekly wages for the bottom 10% dropped by 2.7% (after adjustment for inflation),

Rattner acknowledges that a cause of the erosion of wages at the bottom is the increased supply of unskilled **immigrant workers**. ("At the least, immigration certainly puts further pressure on wages of lower-income workers whose jobs the new arrivals compete for.") But he doesn't dare draw the logical conclusion--that maybe immigration should be controlled in order to raise incomes at the lower end of the labor market. That wouldn't be Democratically Correct and might inhibit Rattner's chances to one day ... I don't know, be Treasury secretary. Instead, he pontificates smugly

But giving in to politically expedient demands, such as barricading our borders, would be a mistake.

Covering up an obvious logical implication of your argument is a form of intellectual dishonesty, no? Who needs it?
...

P.S.: See [this LAT article](#) (on the economic polarization of Los Angeles neighborhoods) for a similar PC avoidance of even mentioning the effect of immigration on wages at the bottom. ...

P.P.S.: Did I miss the meeting at which the Dem-MSM steering committee decided to make income inequality a big issue in time for the midterms? ... It's certainly a legitimate effort, but at some point the Dems are going to have to see that it leads directly to a contradiction with their Latino base: if we're really serious about raising wages at the bottom we'll want to get control of the inflow of the unskilled before rewarding with citizenship the illegals who make up so much of that inflow. ...

More: Give the NYT's Paul Krugman points for [having the balls to confront the policy implications of immigration \(and its wage-depressing effect\)](#) that Rattner chose to ignore. ...

P.P.P.S.: I've argued we shouldn't worry about income inequality per se, but [only as it affects the traditional American ideal of social equality](#)--and the connection between the two is a lot looser than most contemporary liberals will acknowledge. Still, to achieve that ideal it has to be possible for those at the bottom of the labor market who "work and play by the rules," etc., to live a life of dignity and respect. If wages for the unskilled are too low, it makes that very difficult. More important, only an increase in wages at the bottom--like that achieved in the tight labor market at the end of Clinton's term in office--will enable the absorption of the non-working underclass

Build-a-Cocoon

(especially young black men) into the mainstream working society. The underclass, not a rising Gini Index, is the greatest threat to social equality both because those trapped in the underclass have a hard time being treated as equals and because the flight from the underclass, and the crime associated with it, leads to all sorts of neighborhood stratification, not to mention the degradation of common public spaces.) ... But I also [think the sheer numerical income inequality that might be achieved if true "open borders" advocates had their way--](#) e.g. inequality on the scale of Rio de Janeiro, for example--might be great enough in itself to threaten social equality. ...

**--Of course, one reason he's annoying is that he's a [NYT Sacred Cow](#)! 4:40 P.M. [link](#)

If Haynes Johnson were a movie reviewer: The problem with Superman Returns is that Superman "[asks no sacrifice from the American people](#)"! ... 3:48 P.M.

[Eduwonk seems to think](#) the recent [New York charter schools study](#) may be a bit more significant than [others](#) think it is. Meanwhile, he doubts the pro-Dem [Center for American Progress](#) is "in the [teachers'] union busting business" with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Too bad! ... 11:56 A.M.

[Eric Umansky gains access](#) to the NYT's unreleased My Times feature ("Where the best minds in journalism [help](#) you edit the Web") and finds it very revealing. ... See how [Frank Rich builds his cocoon](#)! ... 11:31 A.M.

Monday , July 24, 2006

ABC: It's the Dems Race to Lose! The liberal summer interns who have taken over the writing of ABC's The Note need to get out of Lauriol Plaza!** Here's point #7 in their [rundown of GOP midterm troubles](#):

7. IMMIGRATION: It is still hard to envision a plausible outcome that will [help](#) the Republicans in November. Do-no-harm seems their best bet, and even that looks tough.

Huh? Is it really hard to envision an immigration outcome that [helps](#) the GOPs in November? How about: Congress remains deadlocked and House members use their enforcement-oriented stand to rally their base? ... Or Congress passes a House-style enforcement bill with a comprehensive-reform-later [Senate](#) fig leaf--which satisfies voters that at least something has been done. ... Maybe the Note's seemingly warped conclusion is based on an ultra-sophisticated, insider's seat-by-seat analysis of where the Republican base might make a difference. If so, it's an analysis that eluded the [Washington Post's Jonathan Weisman, who points to four such seats](#). The Post's subhed: "Will the Immigration Issue Save the Republicans?" Guess they can at least envision it. ...

**--P.S.: The Note is so off here that it raises an intriguing, second-tier question: Which Democratic consultant, pollster, or politician are they paying way too much attention to? In 2004 the leading candidate for Note Misleader was Kerry aide Jim Jordan. A good clue as to who's performing similar duties in 2006 might have been contained in today's embarrassingly sycophantic point #6:

6. MR. SCHUMER AND MR. EMANUEL: These cats are not fooling around.

11:09 A.M.

Sunday , July 23, 2006

Et Tu, Tom? Even WaPo's Tom Ricks, consistent Iraq War critic and author of Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, is against withdrawing the troops now. On Meet the Press today he said [[video available here](#)]:

I think it would be irresponsible to go in there and do what we've done and then walk away from it. There's a lot of Iraqis out there who have committed their lives to [helping](#) the Americans do something there. And to abandon those people would be absolutely shameful as well. [Emphasis added]

Build-a-Cocoon

[Sorry](#), [Arianna](#)! ... P.S.: That moral calculation doesn't mean **Bush** and the Republicans shouldn't be held accountable, but it does complicate the picture for Democratic [candidates](#) who might seek to appeal to the "netroots" by one-upping each other on calls for withdrawal. ... 11:58 P.M.

The proverbial [plan so crazy it just might work](#). ... 11:25 P.M.

Saturday , July 22, 2006

Hola, KosThe Blog That Didn't Bark: Slate [John Dickerson notes](#) that ex-Gov. Mark Warner

has largely been able to skirt the contentious issues so far, though in the latest loyalty test he says he is supporting Joe Lieberman in his Democratic primary race against Ned Lamont. [Emphasis added]

No doubt Warner's Lieberman kiss will earn a strong rebuke from Daily Kos' Markos Moulitsas, even though Warner has [hired Kos' buddy Jerome Armstrong](#). ... It must just be my inferior search skills that prevent me from finding Kos' vehement attack! ... After all, Kos [snipes at Sen. Dodd](#) [Senators Boxer and Biden](#) for their support of Lieberman in the primary. How is Warner any different? 5:56 P.M. [link](#)

Is the Democratic elite turning against the teachers' unions? Eduwonk [thinks so](#). Some evidence (and not just from Eduwonk): 1) Democratic [Governor-in-waiting Eliot Spitzer of New York has endorsed opening more independent charter schools](#)--which are typically not unionized to the same degree as public schools--after [a study](#) showed many of them to be doing better than their traditional public competitors.** 2) Speaking at the recent fancy Aspen Institute event, former Clinton official (and now New York City schools chancellor) Joel Klein made a "case that teachers-union contracts are the main obstacle to improving urban education," [according to Mort Kondracke](#):

"The contract protects the interests of adults at the expense of kids," he told a rapt audience, describing how it bars pay differentials based on student performance and service in difficult schools; makes it impossible for principals to fire underperforming teachers; and allows teachers to choose their own professional development tracks, regardless of supply-and-demand needs, such as those for more math and science teachers.

3) Also according to Kondracke, the [Soros-approved](#), pro-Dem Center for American Progress, headed by former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta, has [joined with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) in an effort "likely to target teachers unions that resist reform." (CAP says only, "The Chamber will use the results of the analysis to formulate and aggressively advance public policies to improve state education systems ... ") ...

**-- This study seems significant. Is it? I don't trust the NY Post's analysis, and look to Eduwonk for guidance. ... Update:RCP's Ryan Sager says the results mean ["a little but not a lot"](#) and explains why. Fred Hess, a charter supporter, [warns more strongly](#) against relying on the study. ... 1:37 P.M. [link](#)

ABC Buries the Lede--For a Reason: Here's Point #4 from yesterday's [ABC News Note summary of "key stories"](#) that bear on whether the "Democratic Party [is] on the right track or the wrong track to break from recent electoral patterns" Emphasis added:

4. In a front page story, USA Today's Jill Lawrence reports on a resurgence in union membership across the nation and the two main umbrella organizations playing nicely together, which has allowed the House of Labor to **move forward** with **plans** to spend \$40 million on voter turn out this fall. [LINK](#)

Is there "a resurgence in union membership across the nation"? That would be stunning news, since [union membership has been in relentless long term decline for fifty years](#)--"from more than 35 percent [in 1955] to 12.5 percent last year, including only 7.9 percent of the private-sector workforce," according to a Thomas Edsall WaPo piece from September, 2005. But I can't find any mention of this surprising resurgence in union membership in the Post, or the New York Times. I can't find it on Google [to the contrary](#). I can't find it on [the website of the "strategic organizing" Change to Win unions](#)--you'd think they'd boast about it. And there's no

Build-a-Cocoon

mention of it in the [USA Today story](#) ABC says reports it. (That's a story about unions raising political campaign money and cooperating with each other, which is different.) Tentative conclusion: It doesn't exist. There's no resurgence in union membership. The Note item is in error. [And "it reflects the subconscious liberal yearnings of whatever MSM summer intern wrote it unaware that the cumbersome legalistic mechanisms of Wagner Act unionism are incompatible with productive success in a fast-***moving*** global high-tech economy"?--ed You said that.] 12:57 P.M. [link](#)

Friday , July 21, 2006

I missed Wednesday night's [unveiling of the Tesla electric sports car](#) in Santa Monica. ... Prof. Reynolds is [skeptical](#). ... My friend D.L., who drives a souped-up Porsche, was impressed. He emails:

Was at the Tesla event, lots people and everyone got a short ride....

You remember what I said about getting a powerful car makes you happier because everytime you step on the gas you get a little hormonal rush.

Well, this is better. It's all about the rush, not the motor (which is silent), it feels like space car on wheels. Like an amusement park thrill ride. If you ever had a slot car and wondered "Why don't they build big cars like this" - well, they did. Fun, fun, fun...

The electric-car-from-people-who-like-fast-cars approach has intriguing uncrunchy appeal. Usually fast, sexy cars get all the attention, right? But the Tesla might cause some semiotic confusion among all the L.A. players who've recently bought Priuses because it's considered sexy in Hollywood to not like fast cars. ... Meanwhile: Gas cars are [getting out of hand](#). ... 12:50 P.M.

Rocky Balboa, I.D. Please! At a well-attended [Zocalo public forum on immigration in L.A. on Wednesday](#), prominent attorney/activist Connie Rice asserted confidently that one thing the experts agree on is that Americans aren't willing to take meatpacking-plant jobs. Is that right? ... 12:14 P.M.

Thursday , July 20, 2006

Who's Driving My Plano?--Update: [Kidney hero](#) Virginia Postrel's Dynamist has become the [go-to site for the Plano controversy that's gripped the blogosphere by the throat](#). ... One of Postrel's Dallas readers resurrects the theory--left behind in my [Dunkirk-like evacuation](#) of this blog's earlier position--that the Plano theater "draws people from all over the far-northern suburbs," making Plano B.O. an invalid barometer of a film's popularity among (relatively conservative) Planoites. ... 10:26 P.M.

Tuesday , July 18, 2006

Everybody talking about how there's nothing everybody talks about! Bob Wright and I [discuss, somewhat inconclusively](#), the issue of whether the Webbish "long tail" phenomenon will undesirably reduce the sphere of shared culture. E-mailer C. Friedersdorf says it won't

... because even though there are fewer people watching Jay Leno every night, it's now much easier to communicate with all the people who are watching.

When Bob and Mickey were growing up, you went to school if you wanted to talk about the Ed Sullivan Show and hoped your classmates would be talking about it.

Today if you watch even a niche Bravo reality tv show -- say Top Chef or Project Runway -- you go to Technorati an hour after the show ends and find hundreds of people, far more than attend your classes or work in your office, who are talking about that night's show. One more point:

Build-a-Cocoon

if the obscure episode of Project Runway happened to include a defining cultural moment -- let's say Heidi Klum's dress slipped off -- someone would post it on YouTube, and people would send it to one another on e-mail, etc.

So years ago, common culture required that everyone be watching something at once. Now the Web allows things that would become defining cultural moments but for an audience to attract that audience after the fact.

How many people say that World Cup head butt live? How many saw it on SportsCenter, on an Internet video clip, etc. later on?

That last, boldfaced argument seems powerful. ... P.S.: Isn't the ubiquitous Web discussion of Chris Anderson's Long Tail book itself a small refutation of the common-culture-is-dead thesis? ... Update: Here's Anderson himself [declaring that "hits aren't dead"](#)--which would seem to save the sphere of shared culture. Whew! ... 6:52 P.M.
[link](#)

What you mean "we," Sen. Clinton? When I [read in the NYT](#) that Hillary Clinton had

chastised Democrats Saturday for taking on issues that arouse conservatives and turn out Republican voters rather than finding consensus on mainstream subjects

I thought for one giddy moment that she had actually said something interesting! I should have known better. Media Matters for America [argues that the NYT misreported Hillary's comments](#)--she was really criticizing Republicans when she said

You know, we do things that are controversial. We do things that try to inflame their base so they can turn people out and vote for their candidates. I think we are wasting time.

While Hillary clearly uses "we" in the previous paragraph to mean "we Democrats," she's almost certainly shifted its meaning in this sentence to mean "we Senators." [Listen for yourself here](#). Hillary's most dramatic statement of centrist independence turns out to be a case of crappy syntax. ... P.S.: Media Matters didn't act quickly enough to stop [non-centrist lefties from taking umbrage](#). ... Advice to Hillary: Go with it! The NYT is trying to steer you in the winning direction. Dems are so victory-oriented this year it's not enough to bash the available Souljahs--they're in hiding. You have to actively goad the Souljahs to come out of the woodwork to be bashed! ... 12:42 P.M.

Rear-wheel drive, on the march: How do we know? We have [stats](#). ... [Thanks to reader S.R.] 12:20 P.M.

Mystery Pollster vs. Kos: On [bogus charges of Lieberman "push polls."](#) 12:50 A.M.

Monday , July 17, 2006

"Progressive Realism": My colleague Robert Wright's [bigthink foreign policy op-ed](#) is currently #4 on the NYT's [most e-mailed list](#), and gaining on Shamu! Here are some questions I hope to take up with Wright on bloggingheads.tv tomorrow:

1. Isn't it crude and unfair to accuse President **Bush** of failing to understand "the perspective of the other," including "why some people hate America, and why terrorists kill"? As [E.J. Dionne notes](#), one premise of the neocon "Big Bang" theory on which **Bush** acted in Iraq was precisely that "authoritarian regimes bred opposition movements rebelling against the conditions under which too many people lived." Sounds like empathy to me!

2. Wright discounts the short-term costs --in terms of frustrated aspirations and resentment--of delaying the introduction of democracy while we wait for its inevitable natural triumph in the wake of free markets and free trade. But Wright gives great weight to the short-term costs of military action, in terms of potential terrorists angered by the Iraq invasion. Some sort of double accounting standard is being applied here, no? Maybe the anger produced by the Iraq war can realistically be discounted because (like authoritarianism) it will disappear by the time the "bioweapons most plausibly available to terrorists" become "effective weapons of truly mass destruction."

Build-a-Cocoon

3. A global regime based on "highly intrusive inspections" for WMDs may be necessary, but it sounds almost as "wearying" as a regime based on invasion and regime-change--a constant backdrop of cheating and retreating, accompanied by the threat (or the attempt to prod the Security Council into making the threat) of international sanction or military punishment. Think the winter of 2002 made permanent. Is that an appealing future? ...

4. Wright claims that if we wait for "authoritarianism's demise" rather than trying to force the pace through "invasion or American-backed coups d'etat" the result will be "more indigenous, more culturally authentic paths to democracy." Sounds right. But is the messy attempt at democracy now being undertaken by the Iraqis not "culturally authentic"? If anything it seems too authentic--authentically Shiite vs. authentically Sunni. ...

5. If advances in "information technology" and "munitions technology" establish an "alarming principle" under which "grass-roots hatred and resentment of American may be converted into the death of Americans with growing efficiency," how can we possibly reduce hatred enough to save our skins? If, eventually, any 12 angry men--assuming they're reasonably well-educated--will be able to cook up a devastating attack, isn't it hopeless? We'll never lower the number of angry anti-Americans to single digits.

Update: Bob responds to these questions [on video here](#). ... Instapundit says I ["\[make\] the case for war."](#) I thought I was making a case against a case against war. Not the same thing at all! But I do think it's too early to declare the war a failure the way Dionne does (and George Will [doesn't quite](#)). ... 1:54 A.M. [link](#)

Sunday , July 16, 2006

Escape from Plano! [Virginia Postrel, who lives in Dallas, says I'm wrong](#) about Plano not being socially conservative as well as pro-**Bush**:

Plano is, in fact, a good representative of Red America. Its residents are educated and affluent, and they are also solidly conservative. They vote Republican the way Westside Angelenos vote Democratic--because it's the normal thing to do. Many of them also go to big megachurches that preach very conservative doctrines in a contemporary style because that, too, is normal. ... I don't have poll numbers, but I doubt that a lot of those soccer moms driving SUVs while talking on their cell phones accept Darwinian evolution either--not that it comes up very often. ...

Plano is conservative in all the ways that matter to contemporary politics.

Was my charge--that Plano's not a "conservative bastion"--influenced by the crude belief that someone with (in Postrel's words) "a lot of money, a professional education, and a fancy car" wouldn't tend to be a "quasi-fundamentalist Christian with socially conservative views." Yes! And I cling to that prejudice, especially if you add "and works in a high-tech industry where you wind up hiring a lot of gay college grads." I don't think, in those circumstances, you can afford to get as wildly exercised about sodomy and sin (and if you do, you'll get beaten by Silicon Valley firms that don't). Ideology is determined by the mode of production, comrades! But I defer to Postrel's expertise on the culture of actual, existing Plano.

I still don't think that if a liberal film does well in Plano's Angelika art house cinema it means the movie's ["reaching the red states"](#) in the sense that matters--i.e. the preaching-to-the-unconverted sense. Is that because the Angelika art house draws liberals from throughout the Dallas metro area? Postrel rejects that theory as well--Plano's too far away. (And, as various emailers and [bloggers](#) have noted, there are art house theaters, including an Angelika, in Dallas proper.) Instead she argues that

Plano ... is a big enough place that even a small minority represents a lot of buying power. If every left-of-center Planoite bought a ticket to An Inconvenient Truth, the Gore film would sell out at the art houses.

[Twenty-eight percent](#) of Collin County voted for Kerry, remember.

I will seek refuge in this last-resort fall-back argument. It's still a PR-man's con to pretend that a movie's reaching "red state America" because it does well at the Angelika in Plano--just not for any of the reasons I said! ...

Build-a-Cocoon

P.S.: Postrel gives her thoughts on the Brokeback-in-Plano debate too. I'll let you read them for yourselves. I deny, though, that in Brokeback "[t]here are no cartoonish villains designed to prod you to [the protagonists'] side." What about the anonymous rube-ex-machina homophobic thugs who show up at various points to pummel suspected gays? They're so cartoonish the filmmakers don't dare show their faces. 11:21 P.M. [link](#)

Dem fave [campaign finance expert Bob Bauer suggests that](#) press (and kf) fave campaign finance expert Trevor Potter is **helping** prepare a powerful job for himself as head of the [proposed new Federal Election Administration](#). ... 10:34 P.M.

Buried Lede of the Week: Did Bill Clinton "hint that we went to war for Israel"? Atlantic editor James Bennet, [blogging about an Aspen colloquy between the former president and James Fallows](#):

That sounded like a hint that we went to war for Israel: When Jim asked how the Democrats should handle the Iraq war, Clinton replied in part, "We ought to be whipped, us Democrats, if we allow our differences over what to do now in Iraq to divide us" instead of sticking it to the Republicans. He segued into a discussion of Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman's position in favor of going to war, noting how it squared with the view of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others that Saddam Hussein was such a menace he should be removed regardless of whether he had WMD. Then, out of the blue, came this: "That was also the position of every Israeli politician I knew, by the way." Huh? Where did that come from?

It may have been true - though I knew some Israeli politicians with doubts about the war - but what did it have to do with the rest of his comments? Was it an accusation of dual loyalty? [Emphasis added]

Bennet's powerful alternative explanation: Clinton was just flirting with Queen Noor. ... 12:57 P.M. [link](#)

New Holden Commodore! It's Australian. It won't be sold here. [It was only introduced today and it already looks tired](#). But it's made by GM and might provide the company's North American branch with the rear-drive sedan chassis it desperately needs. 2:11 A.M.

Saturday , July 15, 2006

I admit I doubted reading Lebanese and Israeli bloggers would be a very useful way to learn about the latest Mideast fighting. I mean, anyone with a modem can just spout off! But [N.Z. Bear's Topics Page](#) turns out to be a highly efficient and engaging way to get the flavor and texture of the conflict. (Example: The [advice of Big Pharaoh'sdad](#).) Maybe Bear only picks the best ones. ... P.S.: Are there really no Palestinian bloggers worth listing? ... Update:Kausfiles gets results! Bear has [added Palestinian blogs](#)--over a dozen of them. ... 11:52 A.M.

Thursday , July 13, 2006

Dead Man's Chest: "Keira Knightley is not suffering from anorexia. She's just incredibly, incredibly skinny." [E. Sneed](#):

She told [People](#) that she knows she's not suffering from the common eating disorder because her grandmother and great-grandmother suffered from it. Um, o-kay ...

2:34 A.M.

Skelton in the Dark? Last Fall, L.A. Times state politics columnist George Skelton [urged his readers to](#) [vote against](#) the redistricting reform Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger had placed on the ballot (as Prop. 77). Skelton conceded reform was necessary to prevent self-serving pols from carving out safe seats--the current system was "indefensible," he declared. But Schwarzenegger's **plan**, which relied on a **panel** of retired judges to draw the lines, had some "Rube Goldberg gadgetry." Sure, but wasn't it the only proposal likely to come along for a while? Don't worry, Skelton said--the Democrats who control the legislature had "pledged to pass a sane, bipartisan **plan** next year."

Build-a-Cocoon

[E]ven Democratic lawmakers are pledging to strip themselves of their redistricting power. Very few politicians still are arguing that the Legislature should keep drawing its own maps.

Well, now it's next year and, [gee, the Democrats are somehow unable to agree on a redistricting reform plan!](#) Skelton tells us that unless they are offered the "sweetener" of weakened term limits, "it's not likely that Assembly Democrats will surrender the right to shape their own districts. "

"It's very difficult for members to give up any power," notes [reformer Alan] Lowenthal, who argued fruitlessly for his proposal at a **Senate** Democratic caucus just before legislators adjourned for a five-week vacation.

Here's a question: Is Skelton such a fool that he actually believed the Democrats would pass a redistricting reform once they'd defeated Schwarzenegger's? Or was he swayed by a not-so-subtle not-so-subconscious anti-Schwarzenegger bias--perhaps a desire to deny the governor a victory, or to see him humbled, or to please layoff-prone LAT bosses who might entertain those anti-Arnold impulses? Either way, doesn't Skelton owe his readers an apology for his pathetically bad judgment and advice? Any idiot (e.g. [me](#), and [Kos](#)) could see at the time that Prop. 77 was probably the best shot Californians would have to end safe-seat gerrymandering for many years.

7/14 Update: Schwarzenegger now publicly advocates a [weaker term-limit/redistricting reform combo](#). I don't quite see how it **helps** the semi-popular cause of redistricting reform to add to it an even less popular anti-term-limit cause. But Schwarzenegger has been forced to appease Democratic legislators who've reneged on their anti-gerrymandering pledge. ... 1:35 A.M. [link](#)

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

The Plano Con is back. Once again [a leftish movie is claiming "red-state" embrace](#) simply because it's doing good business at a metroplex in what one kf reader calls a

"ritzy, upscale, SUV-choked, conspicuous-consumption-driven Dallas exurb populated by more east-coast 'expatriates' than native Texans."

Last year it was Brokeback Mountain's producers, [via Frank Rich](#) [\$], successfully using the bogus Plano example. This year it's the promoters of Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth. S.F. Chronicle's gullible Joe Garofoli reports (in an article headlined "Gore movie is reaching the red states too") that Truth is getting "off-the-chart audience recommendations in conservative bastions like Plano." The film's pleasing of Plano allegedly shows it's reaching what its director Davis Guggenheim calls "that guy driving a pickup who is a little bit skeptical of what global warming is about." Don't believe it. ... P.S.: Not only is Plano not all that much of a "conservative bastion"*[see Update below]--and certainly not the good-ol'-boy cow town its characterful name conjures for clueless coastal types--but movies playing there typically draw "liberals travelling from around the metro region, not conservatives from the immediate vicinity," notes alert reader T.M. ... [Emphasis added]

**--Here's T.M.'s description of Plano: "Plano is no more conservative than Sunnyvale or Palo Alto; it's a typical 21c American metropolitan suburban mongrel (10% Asian, 10% hispanic) that comprises newcomers from a wide variety of backgrounds and income groups. There are subdivisions with million-dollar McMansions, others between \$300-450k. It isn't redneck by any stretch, or old-money Republican. ... Plano's character, if it has one, is defined by a) white-collar managers at corporate headquarters of bland retail and technology firms (EDS, JC Penney, Frito Lay etc) and b) families obsessed with outstanding schools for their kids".

Update--I Am Curious, Plano: Numerous readers email to note Plano's very Republican voting record--[Collin County, less than half of which is Plano, went 71% for Bush in 2004](#). It's definitely a **Bush** bastion. It's less clear to me that it's a "conservative" bastion if by that you mean social conservative (gay marriage, school prayer, abortion, etc.). Nor does it seem to be a "pickup" truck, chewin' tobacco bastion in the classic sense. More of a Bobo Boomburg. Either way, the use of Plano to demonstrate red state outreach is still a PR-man's con because, as mentioned, the [Angelika Film Center](#), where the Gore movie is showing, draws from the entire Dallas metro area. It's an art house featuring standard art house films--such as (currently) "Keeping Up with the Steins"

Build-a-Cocoon

and "Wassup Rockers." If a film does well there that says no more about any subversive appeal to conservatives than if the film sold out the NuArt in West L.A.. Or the Angelika Film Center on Houston St. in Manhattan, for that matter.

More: [Robert Farley notes](#) that pro-market economic conservatives might be less receptive to the global warming argument than moralistic social conservatives--so if a) Plano's filled with economic-but-not-social conservatives and if b) they're going to the movie, then c) Gore really is making inroads into enemy territory. Good point. But I doubt they're the ones going to the movie. ... P.S.: And note that the Chronicle's [Garofoli doesn't even claim](#) the movie is doing well in Plano, just that it's getting "off-the-chart audience recommendations." ... 5:33 P.M.
[link](#)

Mystery Pollster on [why it's so hard to poll accurately](#) in the Lieberman/Lamont Connecticut primary. ... 4:57 P.M.

Come Home, Dick Morris! All is Forgiven: The nearest thing to an actual ideological manifesto from Markos Moulitsas that I've seen is [this piece on "The Libertarian Dem."](#) In it, Moulitsas says nothing about combating the evil of globalization, or reining in obscene incomes at the top. He conspicuously fails to mention providing more resources for our public schools. Affirmative action? Democrats have long tried to redress generations of racism through preferences, but in the face of concerted Republican attack on this core Democratic idea, Moulitsas is silent. Indeed he calls for a "society where success is predicated on the merit of our ideas and efforts"--code words that Justices Thomas and Scalia understand all too well! Then comes some red meat for the Reagan crowd :

Our first proposed solution to a problem facing our nation shouldn't be more regulation, more government programs, more bureaucracy.

And in what he admits is part of an appeal to "Mountain West" Democrats, Kos explicitly endorses "the 2nd Amendment and the right to bear arms."

Can it be? Is Kos a ... [triangulator](#)? ... [Purge him](#) immediately! 3:57 A.M. [link](#)

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

Can a cheap headline featuring hot-button words "Kos" and "Coulter" goose a blogger's hit count? The stats are in and the answer is ... unfortunately ... yes. ... P.S.: But the hed does refer to an actual item, which is [here](#) . 11:55 A.M.

Monday, July 10, 2006

Kos [mocks Sen. Lieberman](#) for naming his ad hoc independent party "Connecticut for Lieberman:"

It's still about him. It's always about him.

Hmm. What's the name of Kos's site again? Daily Netroots? Daily People Power? ... [Stolen from reader C.] 5:39 P.M.

The Atlantic's editors have hit on a way to make you hate them: [Blogging](#) to let you know what a challenging, "thought-provoking" time they're having at the Aspen Ideas Festival listening to E.O. Wilson, Alan Greenspan, Bill Clinton and Karl Rove, among others:

At 6.30am [we glided out of Aspen in a fleet of silent shining limos](#) (furnished by Lexus, one of the meeting's sponsors: I could get used to it).

12:22 P.M.

Move over, Echelon: The ultra-secret, [discussion-muffling](#) liberal "Townhouse" group [revealed here](#) . 9:15 A.M.

Build-a-Cocoon

This Land is Their Land:

"The Hispanic world did not come to the United States," Carlos Fuentes observes. "The United States came to the Hispanic world. It is perhaps an act of poetic justice that now the Hispanic world should return." -- from Tony Horwitz, "Immigration--and the Curse of the Black Legend," NYT, July 9, 2006

I don't understand the argument behind [Horwitz's Sunday NYT op-ed essay](#). Sure, the immigration debate should be informed by "a full awareness of the history of the 500-year Spanish presence in the Americas and its seesawing fortunes in the face of Anglo encroachment." But which way does that awareness cut? The Spaniards were here first, Horwitz tells us. "From 1819 to 1848, the United States and its army increased the nation's area by roughly a third at Spanish and Mexican expense, including three of today's four most populous states: California, Texas and Florida." OK. But doesn't that make Mexican and other Spanish-speaking immigrants profoundly different from previous immigrants. Unlike other immigrants--Italians or Irish or Koreans--they do not necessarily think they are in a foreign land (as the ubiquitous "I am in my HOMELAND" signs at the pro-immigrant marches try to tell us). Unlike other immigrants, Latinos have a powerful rationale for challenging, at the very least, the current common language. Do we want a common language or not? At the extreme, they have non-crazy grounds for challenging the very constitution of the U.S. within its current borders. Their land was taken by a bunch of Anglo racists!

Current pro-legalization dogma assures us that there is no reason to worry about of Quebec style separatism or Kosovo-style irredentism in the Southwest. Horwitz shows why there are plenty of reasons to worry. The stronger the prior Spanish claim the worse the danger--and the more reason to get control of the border, and of the cultural composition of the next generation of immigrants, before it's too late. Fuentes easy invocation of "poetic justice" isn't shaming so much as chilling. We want immigrants who come for freedom and prosperity, not "poetic justice," no?

Then there's Horwitz's last line:

It's an homage to our history, not a betrayal of it, to **welcome** the latest arrivals, just as the Indians did those tardy and uninvited Pilgrims who arrived in Plymouth not so long ago.

The Indians were laudably **welcoming**. How'd that work out for them? 12:29 A.M. [link](#)

Sunday, July 9, 2006

"Don't Cross the 'Cult of Kos'": Progressive Democrat Richard of Tikun Olam posted a [diary](#) on DailyKos suggesting that "there is a conflict of interest in accepting money from a campaign which you endorse in your blog"-and he was **welcomed** by the free-spirited Kos community for starting a lively, insightful debate about the issue! ... Wait. Sorry. [That's actually not what happened](#). He was maliciously "tagged"! Labeled a "concern troll" "[E]ssentially 'disappeared'"! And a comment of his was deleted. Richard says:

My treatment made me feel more like I was participating in a cult in which I'd insulted the chief leader and was receiving the deep six treatment in response.

He's been led "to understand some of the criticism of Kos and his site flung at him by his critics." All this, he says, despite "what I thought was the nuance I tried to add to my post." ... [Thanks to [D.R.](#)] 2:16 A.M.

When was the last time you read a good, juicy item on the New York Post's Page Six? Bet it's been a while! Ron Burkle's sting may have done more damage than it seemed like at the time. Either a) the Post has now gotten cautious; or b) people have stopped doing embarrassing things or c) they never did do the embarrassing things that the Post reported and the Post has now stopped reporting these things that didn't happen, which may be the same as (a)--or d) Jared Paul Stern was a more essential employee than we were led to believe, which may be the same as (c) ... 1:10 A.M.

Saturday, July 8, 2006

Build-a-Cocoon

Kabuki Watch: According to DailyPundit, Sen. Santorum has introduced [a weak, let's-show-them-we-did-something enforcement-only immigration bill](#) . DP fears a one-two punch:

[P]assing the bill would give the impression that Congress has done what it needs to do to secure the borders. Then "our" representatives would be free to get on with codifying amnesty plus practically unlimited levels of legal migration.

I suspect the pro-legalization forces have vastly underestimated the symbolic ability of fences and walls--especially real, as opposed to "virtual" fences and walls--to placate the Tancredo anti-illegal faction. Santorum proposes only the "virtual" kind of fence, but smart McCain-**Bush**-Kennedy conspirators could always make agreeing to the "actual" kind seem like a dramatic concession.

Wall + Semi-Amnesty

would seem to be the one-two punch opponents of legalization should worry about . 4:27 P.M.

Kos [Defends](#) _____! [Steve Smith](#) :

It seems Jerome Armstrong has a [new client](#)

P.S.: Kos' post could also show that he has a mind of his own. (It's everyone else who [needs to toe the line](#) !) ...

P.P.S.: Since Kos is [more influential than mere Senators and Congressmen](#) , I guess this controversy is settled. ... [Note to [Andrew Sullivan](#): Yes, you have to click on the links to understand what the hell this item is about. Sorry for the inconvenience!] 2:26 P.M. [link](#)

Hotelling in Mexico: Not a Travel Guide! Instapundit says it's ["kind of odd"](#) that Mexico would split 50/50 right after the U.S. split 50/50. [No it's not!](#) ... 12:59 P.M.

Friday, July 7, 2006

Tomorrow's CW Today: Fresh **Bush** chief of staff Josh Bolten says he doesn't want to be judged by poll results. [Good thing for him.](#) But wasn't Bolten being [hailed as a "momentum"-building](#) genius a couple of weeks ago? I think he was!

"Part of the problem is they were having pops of good news in the last few months, but it seemed like they were happening in a vacuum," said Dan Senor, a former administration spokesman in Iraq ... "Josh's organizational intensity and attention to detail **helps** the White House better capitalize on these individual pops of good news, and that's what you need to build momentum."

'Capitalizing on good news' to 'build momentum' is the sort of thing that should show up in the polls, no? Expect the CW on Bolten to flip soon. ... Everyone's already written their source-greasers, right? ... 1:16 P.M.

Thursday, July 6, 2006

[Michael Barone cites](#) three developments that "point toward a possible [immigration] compromise that could conceivably be adopted":**

- 1) Rep. Chris Cannon won his GOP primary against an anti-legalization candidate.
- 2) Arlen Specter conceded the **Senate** might go for a bill that "made **quest**-worker and legalization programs contingent on concrete achievements in border security." Movement!
- 3) Pence met with **Bush** to promote his 'compromise' **plan**, which would let illegals already here apply for **quest** worker status by briefly returning to their home countries.

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But

1) Cannon [didn't win by campaigning for a compassionate, Bush-style legalization approach](#) . He won by giving the (false) impression he opposed a compassionate **Bush**-style approach. ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Male announcer: "But Congressman Chris Cannon says only if they come here legally.") Are all GOP House members confident they can pull off a similar con?

2) Is it an auspicious sign for **Bush's** "comprehensive" approach that he and the **Senate** are **moving** away from it? Or is it maybe a too-little-too-late admission of weakness familiar to those who watched **Bush's** breathlessly-described legislative "strategy" during the Social Security fight, with Pence playing the role of [Pozen](#) ? The only substantive concession from the House side seems to be the [failure of the GOP leaders Hastert and Boehner to "dismiss the idea."](#) (P.S.: The problem with requiring "concrete achievements," of course, is that the legislative promise of later legalization will itself attract more immigrants and make any enforcement "trigger" hard to achieve--unless it's meaningless to begin with. If you want to be in a position legalize existing illegals in the future. I'd argue, you have to [kill the legalization idea in the present](#) .)

3)The Pence **Plan** is a scam. It rewards those who entered the U.S. illegally by letting them arrange for their employers to in effect [earmark guest-worker slots](#) for them.

P.S.: Influence Peddler--and the Roll Call articles quoted there--offer a clearer idea than either Barone or [the NYT](#) of [what a relatively pro-Bush compromise might look like](#) .

--If the final immigration compromise has as many outs as this Barone sentence, it will be a brilliant piece of legislative indecision. I count four contingency-covering fudge-phrases: "point toward," "possible," "could," and "conceivably." ... kf says: It's possible the **Senate could conceivably cave to the House and pass an uncomprehensive bill containing no legalization provisions for already-here illegals at all. The President could conceivably sign this possible bill. Several factors point toward it! 3:00 A.M.

Dem House Fundraising Dips After New York Nuclear Holocaust: ABC's [The Note asks](#) , of the North Korean missile launches--

8. Will this impact fundraising or advertising for 2006? ...

The Note is

a) parodying itself

b) becoming a parody of itself

It's a fine line! You make the call. (But I say (b), in this case.) 1:05 A.M.

Wednesday, July 5, 2006

If Congress doesn't pass an immigration bill this year, [that does not simply preserve the status quo](#) ! 12:54 A.M.

Dan Riehl says [the problem with Kos isn't Kosola](#) P.S.: Riehl has a habit of burying his lede. You want to scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "As an aside, ..." 12:53 A.M.

Has McCain blown the GOP nomination? [Not yet](#) ! 12:08 A.M.

Tuesday , July 4, 2006

The Cannon Con: GOP Rep. Chris Cannon has [a clear interpretation](#) of his 56-44 primary victory over a Tancredolike border-enforcement challenger:

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Rep. Chris Cannon said his solid victory in Utah's Republican primary is good news for President **Bush** and those seeking a consensus on immigration policy this year. Cannon supports President **Bush's** proposal for a **guest**-worker program [Emphasis added]

Hmmm. It's certainly tempting to describe a reversed-image, bookend-like parallelism between Cannon's primary victory and Brian Bilbray's victory in California's recent open seat election. And that seems to be the CW approach: a) The California race showed that the anti-GOP wave wasn't big enough to displace a veteran Republican in a Republican district. Utah showed the conservative anti-legalization wave wasn't big enough to displace a veteran Republican in a Republican district. b) California demonstrated that opposition to legalizing illegal immigration is a strong force. Utah demonstrated it's not that strong. c) The Sensenbrenner "enforcement-only" approach wins one (CA). The **Bush** "comprehensive" approach wins the other (Utah). d) In both races, last-minute gaffes hurt the challengers, muddling the contrasting take-home lessons.

But wait: there's a deeper lack of contrast. Bilbray ran on a platform of opposition to illegal immigration. Meanwhile, Cannon ... also ran on a platform of opposition to illegal immigration. Here's the text of a last-minute Cannon TV ad, as reported in the Salt Lake Tribune:

"I'm Congressman Chris Cannon and I approve this message." Female announcer: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Male announcer: "But Congressman Chris Cannon says only if they come here legally. That's why Chris Cannon is fighting to pass legislation to strengthen our borders and toughen penalties on illegal immigration. And why Chris Cannon would require all immigrants to carry a tamper-proof ID card, or be deported. Fighting to stop illegal immigration. (Because it matters). Re-elect Congressman Chris Cannon." [Emphasis added]

I would guess that voters who responded to this TV message were not sending a rousing message of support for the **Bush/Kennedy/McCain** "path to citizenship" approach. This impression is reinforced by President **Bush's** recorded message on Cannon's behalf, in which **Bush** seemingly doesn't mention immigration:

"Chris Cannon is an effective leader for Utah in congress. He's a strong Republican, a proven defender of traditional family values," says the president's recorded message. "And in the War on Terror, Chris Cannon has stood shoulder to shoulder with our troops as they fight to defeat the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here in America. The people of Utah need and deserve the leadership Chris Cannon provides."

Cannon's victory is even harder to interpret as a rejection of the Sensenbrenner enforcement-only approach because Cannon's campaign featured a ringing endorsement from one James Sensenbrenner. Here's the Deseret Morning News:

In a recorded message, Sensenbrenner said Cannon is "a major force in Congress." "And long before it was fashionable, Chris Cannon was working with me to stop illegal immigration. Just about everybody in Congress is talking about immigration, but Chris Cannon is one of the few doing the heavy lifting to actually solve the problem."

It's all eerily reminiscent of the welfare debate, in which anti-welfare candidates sincerely bashed welfare and pro-welfare candidates insincerely bashed welfare. We know how that turned out. This could be why House Republicans don't seem to be interpreting Cannon's win as a reason to abandon their enforcement-only position. It's also why, when you encounter the [quotes from Democratic leaders in WaPo](#) (Sample: "Republicans want to use this like Willie Horton in 1988 and gay marriage in 2004"--Sen. Schumer) you can smell their fear. 2:22 A.M. [link](#)

Monday, July 3, 2006

Note to [Instapundit](#) , [PJM](#) : That's a [good photo](#) of James Wolcott--introspective, brooding, sensitive. Probably taken back when he still had neoliberal nuance! 10:49 P.M.

"Pay up if you expect us to shut up when you screw up": Rogers Cadenhead-- [still on the Kosola case](#) P.S.: Just when you're getting into the [American Thinker's paranoid conspiracy theory about the MSM](#) --that

Build-a-Cocoon

they've decided to singe Kos but not destroy him--Noel Sheppard blows his credibility by portraying David Brooks as part of the great liberal pro-Warner conspiracy. ...

However, the Brooks column in the Times running on the same day as the Newsweek article is likely no coincidence. And, the timing of all this negative attention towards Kos indicates that the media are indeed afraid this issue could blow up at any minute, and are therefore trying to distance themselves from him and his associates while doing their best to protect Dean and Warner.

Substitute "ruling class" for "media" and suddenly you're at a 1972 Carl Oglesby lecture. ... I'm willing to believe in paranoid conspiracy theories, but only simple paranoid conspiracy theories. 5:42 P.M.

Saturday, July 1, 2006

[Patterico has the solution](#) for responsible newspapers seeking to publish reports revealing sensitive national security secrets without the worry that people will read them: TimesSelect! I knew it would be good for something. 11:23 P.M.

Thursday, June 29, 2006

Megalomaniacal Moulitsas Quote of the Day: [Too good to check and make sure](#) it was accurately translated into Swedish and back again (but feel free):

"I wouldn't want to be a senator or congressman. I'm able to influence politics much more effectively doing what I do. Now I can shape the national political debate. The only way I could exert more influence would be if I were president."

[David Brooks](#) had a point! ... P.S.: And Mark Warner certainly [seems to not want to piss him off](#) 4:17 P.M.

"Jeez. Why are you spending so much time on Kos," I'm often asked by exasperated readers. "We come to your site for Burkle." Good point! ... In this month's Los Angeles, Steve Oney takes you inside Team Burkle as [PR man Mike Sitrick and his billionaire client have a conference call to decide whether to tell the truth](#) P.S.: It turns out Burkle didn't actually write the WSJ op-ed piece that appeared under his name. It was "ghosted by Sitrick." Who knew? Needless to say, the piece [called for stricter journalistic standards of ethics](#) 3:35 P.M.

[Influence Peddler](#) claims Larry Sabato has written [something "very interesting."](#) I deny it. ... 2:53 P.M.

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

David Brooks timeline of Kos' allegiance-switch in the Ohio U.S. **Senate** race may or may not be [tendentiously garbled](#) , but here's a [credible and seemingly definitive account](#) on Buckeye State Blog by a bitter supporter of the candidate Kos abandoned. It's still pretty damning. How damning? Let's say there are four levels of possible Kos corruption:

Hypothetical Level 1 Kosola: Kos' buddy Jerome Armstrong is hired by campaign X and gets Kos to switch allegiances to X--and Kos switches, knowing there's something monetary in it for him, Kos, if he does. To my knowledge, nobody has made a case for this in Ohio.

Hypothetical Level 2 Kosola: Kos switches allegiance when Candidate X pays money to Armstrong (by hiring him), not to Kos. This is the level of corruption suggested for the Ohio case by the misleading timeline offered by Brooks. But Armstrong seems to have been hired by Candidate X before Kos initially endorsed X's opponent (and then flipped).

Less-Hypothetical Level 3 Kosola: Kos' support isn't contingent on any money changing hands, but Armstrong consciously (if not explicitly) sells his "access" to Kos as part of what a candidate gets when he hires Armstrong.

Build-a-Cocoon

This would be standard Washington-style influence-peddling on Armstrong's part. It's not illegal, but it's corrupt in my book--and at least used to be corrupt in most "progressive" books. But it's not as corrupt as Levels 1 and 2.

Level 4 Kosola, a.k.a. Accidental Kosola or One-Sided Kosola: Armstrong doesn't realize he's selling access to Kos; he's just naively doing his consulting thing. If candidates want to pay him money thinking he's going to deliver Kos--well, that's what they think. He's not really aware of their thoughts. It just all works out for him!

Brooks doesn't nail Kos on Level 2, as noted, and the Buckeye State blogger doesn't really allege either Levels 1 or 2 either. He suggests a nasty version of Level 3, but phrases it as a question. ... Those who still hope for a Level 1 case might do well to more precisely follow the flow of advertising money that Armstrong's candidates sluice to "netroots" bloggers, including Kos, according to [Buckeye State](#).

P.S: Armstrong has [blogged breezily](#) in his own defense.

Let me just state for the record that any payola allegations or some quid pro quo deal involving Markos and myself are complete fabrications.

'No Quid Pro Quo' is of course the life-giving motto of Level 3 "access" peddlers. ... Armstrong is also surprisingly effective at admitting and charmingly deflating his [astrological speculations](#) , until you examine these sentences closely:

Down that line, I dabbled with planets and predictions in the most abstract manner, as one of several different predictive mathematical disciplines, when coming out of finances and into politics during my early blogging days (nobody is surprised that remembers the early 2001 days here), and since then have completely tapered out of it over time. So yea, the cons got me on this one being a little out of the ordinary It has nothing to do with what I consult with in online political strategy. [Emphasis added]

Hmm. From "finances" to "astrology" into "politics" in a seemingly easy progression. What is the common element in Armstrong's blogging efforts in these three successive areas? Answer: BS! Armstrong defended [bad stocks](#) , then he defended [junk theories of the universe](#) , then he conned a generation of Democrats into [thinking they were going to win the 2002 midterms](#) ! Now he's promoting Mark Warner. ... Edwards supporter [Neil Sinhababu's forceful post](#) stresses that it was more than BS. It was BS dispensed "to people who trusted him." [via [Chris' double-secret hidden blog](#)] ... 9:59 P.M. [link](#)

The **Senate** Starts to Crumble? Who said that when it comes to immigration reform it's the '**Senate** bill or nothing'?* It sure [looks like](#) **Senate** conference leader Arlen Specter is **moving** rapidly, if not desperately, in the House's 'enforcement-only' direction. Specter's now willing to accept making the **Senate's quest** worker and legalization programs "contingent on having a secure border," reports the Washington Times. Specter also said

"I don't think the **Senate** will pass a bill that's limited to [enforcement]."

No fair issuing sweeping categorical prohibitions! Throw the steering wheel out the window! [You mean that's a suprisingly weak formulation?--ed Yes. He doesn't "think." This is the pre-conference bluster period, remember. House members may think he might think different in a few months!]. ... P.S.: More Specter

"It may be down the line that we will come to some terms on a timetable, with border security first and employment verification first."

How about this face-saving timetable: Border security, first, employment verification first--and Congress promises that in a few years it will debate a legalization bill? Throw the man a lifeline! ...

*--Answer: [Fred Barnes](#) ! 2:05 P.M. [link](#)

Monday, June 26, 2006

Build-a-Cocoon

Bob Wright thinks David Brooks owes Kos a [Wright has a point](#) 9:11 P.M. [link](#)

Mystery Pollster [investigates the general applicability](#) of Peggy Noonan's [counterstereotypical observation](#) that

I've never met a career military man who was a conservative on social issues. I think they tend to see questions such as abortion and marriage as essentially uninteresting, private and not subject to the movement of machines.

MP's conclusions (see also [here](#) and [here](#)) surprisingly confirm Noonan's point with respect to one part of the military population. ... P.S.: I'm not sure most polls will capture Noonan's point--she may have been describing military types who will self identify as "conservative" in surveys, and answer "yes" to poll questions about, say, whether abortion should be banned, but who essentially don't care that much about such issues. Note also that only [19% of military "careerists"](#) wanted to ban abortion "entirely". ... P.P.S.: It might be revealing to compare the views of the white males who predominate in the officer corps with the views of white males in the civilian population. 9:11 P.M. [link](#)

I'm on the East Coast and there is flooding in the area, but all essential kaosfiles employees have reported for work! I credit my Pat Riley-esque motivational techniques. 7:45 P.M.

Defining Defeat Down: Does TNR's [Spencer Ackerman really think it would necessarily be a "defeat"](#) if Iraqi PM Nouri Al Maliki proceeds with

a reconciliation **plan** ... that essentially uses anti-occupation sentiment to unite the country, which means offering the Sunni insurgents amnesty for anti-U.S. attacks and demands a timetable for U.S. withdrawal.

Technically, Ackerman only says that this is what **Bush** "has defined for over a year as defeat," after which he links to a [Bush talk that demonstrates no such thing](#) In the linked talk, **Bush** says it would be a defeat if "If the United States of America leaves before this Iraqi government can defend itself and sustain itself and govern itself ... " But of course the Maliki **plan** is designed precisely to create a government that can sustain itself. If the **plan** succeeds, it doesn't seem like a "defeat" in either **Bush's** definition or in reality. ... Is Ackerman so determinedly hostile to **Bush** that he's rushing to redefine relative success in Iraq as a "defeat"? Is he worried that Maliki's **plan** might work? You make the call! ... 5:51 P.M.

Read My Lips . No New Planets! Mark Warner's plea to [Jerome Armstrong?](#) ... P.S.: Favorite Armstrong Astroworld quote:

It's not a stretch to trace the whole internet back to the Uranus/Neptune conjunction in Capricorn ...

Already you can see the Warner anti-Gore strategy taking shape. ("You invented the Internet? Tell it to Uranus!") [via [Plank](#)] 5:36 P.M. [link](#)

Saturday, June 24, 2006

Oxygen: The Kosola story has [made the leap into non-cyberspace](#) ! But not the leap over the TimesSelect wall. ... Update: Newsweek gives it a [value-adding MSM graf](#)

P.S.: [Kos responds](#) to David Brooks' column, with characteristic attention to the merits:

They can praise us, they can trash us, they can ignore us, and ultimately none of that will matter as long as we keep doing what we've been doing.

Whether we succeed or not will depend on our own efforts. Not those of anyone else.

Build-a-Cocoon

Hmm. Mark Warner may have something to do with it too. If he cuts his aide (and Kos buddy) Jerome Armstrong loose, that won't be a great advertisement for the Kos team. Even if he doesn't, Warner must be rapidly approaching the point where his association with Armstrong has brought him more trouble than it has benefit.

P.P.S.: The National Journal's [Beltway Blogroll](#) derogates that astrology angle:

Armstrong is a fan of astrology -- the implication being that he is not to be taken seriously. This would be one of those bizarre storylines I mentioned The revelation doesn't seem relevant to anything and sounds like the beginnings of a [smear campaign](#) much like the one directed at conservative blogger Ben Domenech earlier this year.

Why isn't it relevant? The argument "if he believes X, how can we trust his judgment on Y" often provokes righteous outrage (when applied, for example, to Carter-era Democrats who were followers of EST, or Scientologists). I suppose the fear is that the "if he believes X" argument opens up the door to disputes between religions. The trouble is, it's a perfectly logical and reasonable argument to make--even if you can't always make it in public. Mormon Mitt Romney may be about to discover this....

If I were Armstrong I'd try to figure out a way to get the S.E.C.'s blessing to tell my side of the story quickly. ... 8:14 P.M.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who [previously declared](#) aides saw an "aura" of light around him when he spoke to the U.N., today boasted

I know I have sort of arrived in a scary way, because now I'm not being attacked for what I've said and done. People are making stuff up about me now. They're inventing things. And so I know now I'm on a different plane.

The prospect of this man getting hold of nuclear weapons is frightening indeed. ... Oh, wait. [That wasn't Ahmadinejad at all](#) . Sorry. ... The nuclear thing still holds, though. ... 12:33 A.M.

Friday, June 23, 2006

To the Moon! [Dan Riehl](#) and [Red State bloggers](#) offer tidbits about Mark Warner aide Jerome Armstrong that are strange enough for me to worry they're some sort of trick to trap bloggers into libeling Kos' buddy. Read them with appropriate wide-eyed skepticism. You're allowed to smile, though. ... [Wizbang argues](#) :

The Warner and [Sherrod] Brown campaigns are in a bind. Dropping Armstrong is the logical course of action, but it they do they risk losing the support of Kos, whose support seems to correlate pretty strongly to Armstrong's employment.

Meanwhile, Chris Suellentrop's [refrigerator light](#) is on again, but the door is still closed. ... Just between you and me, Suellentrop notes that Armstrong is in a bind too:

Moulitsas also suggests in his e-mail that Armstrong himself will "go on the offensive" about the story in "a couple of months," but that's highly unlikely. Armstrong has accepted a permanent injunction that prohibits him from asserting his innocence, or from asking his friends to assert it. The injunction states that Armstrong has agreed "not to take any action or to make or permit to be made any public statement denying, directly or indirectly, any allegation in the complaint or creating the impression that the complaint is without factual basis."

Binds all around. 11:38 P.M.

Thursday, June 22, 2006

Mo : [See correction [below](#)] [Kos publicly defends himself](#) --but not Armstrong, who is probably the main person we want to hear from. [Jason Zengerle responds](#) , noting that Kos'

Build-a-Cocoon

restatement that he is not a consultant still does not answer the serious questions that have been raised about his relationship with Armstrong and whether there is some arrangement by which politicians who hire Armstrong as a consultant then receive Kos's support.

Zengerle also quotes from some Kos-sympathizers on the secretive liberal "Townhouse" mailing list who were troubled by the Kosola allegations. (Sample: "I dont see how this can be ignored. We should all write in defense of this once we know the facts. Jerome?") ... Jerome? ... Confusion-generating update: See [Gilliard's questioning](#) of that e-mail. Correction and update: [Zengerle now agrees Gilliard](#) didn't write the email. But [did anyone](#), or was it a fake? ...

P.S.: Kos repeats a boast he made in his "Townhouse" email, that the YearlyKos staffers

got a whole slew of corrections and apologies in response to pieces in the NY Times and Slate

There has been no correction or apology by Slate that I can find. There was a correction and apology on [Bob Wright's bloggingheads.tv](#). ... 1:05 P.M. [link](#)

Wednesday, June 21, 2006

Kos Wants Silence! TNr's [Jason Zengerle has discovered](#) one reason why normally fierce Kos defenders have been strangely silent on the Kosola controversy: In a message to "'Townhouse,' a private email list comprising elite liberal bloggers"--the authenticity of which seems to be undisputed--DailyKos founder Markos Moulitsas has issued a

request to you guys [that] that you ignore this for now. It would make my life easier if we can confine the story. Then, once Jerome [Armstrong] can speak and defend himself, then I'll go on the offensive ... and anyone can pile on. If any of us blog on this right now, we fuel the story. Let's starve it of oxygen.

A shrewd strategy, designed to prevent the Kosola scandalette from "making the jump to the traditional media." I've pursued the identical strategy myself, in analogous circumstances, though with a far less powerful and centralized institutional apparatus. So far, the "sheep-like" Kositburo members have largely complied. ...

The email also contains a cursory defense of Kosbuddy Jerome Armstrong signing a suggestive consent decree with the SEC ("he was a poor grad student at the time so he settled because he had no money"), plus some thuggy blustering about "lawsuits" and "exploring legal options." Kos offers no defense, in Zengerle's account, on the central moral (not legal) corruption at the heart of the Kosola scandal: whether one thing you get when you buy Jerome Armstrong's services is highly effective "access" to his co-author Kos--access that in practice affects Kos' loyalties and the direction he sends his followers. If that's the case, it seems just as corrupt (and just as non-illegal) as when a former Tom Delay aide sells himself to corporate clients in part on the basis of his "access" to the bigshot he used to work for. [That's business as usual](#) in Washington--but I thought the Kos reformers were supposed to be different.

If Armstrong did, as the S.E.C. alleged, [tout an iffy Internet stock in exchange for "undisclosed compensation,"](#) that a) illustrates that some things that are legal in politics are less legal in business; b) suggests that, instead of following the traditional path to Beltway corruption--youthful idealism gradually transformed into mature access-peddling--Armstrong may have had a non-idealistic attitude from the start; and c) raises suspicions that Armstrong's candidate-**touting** generally has been less sincere than previously suspected (which in turn undermines the credibility of those, like Kos, who've let themselves be influenced by Armstrong).

Is the newly-discovered Kositburo itself a sinister institution? In recent years the right has behaved as if it had some sort of shadowy de facto steering committee. You figured the Left must have something like that--how else to explain why an antiwar site like Huffington Post would suddenly decide to [seize the cheap partisan opportunity to posture as patriotic by making a show of opposing the Iraqi governments attempts to end violence through an amnesty program](#) (and mocking the GOP's failure to similarly posture)? Maybe Arianna got a "Townhouse" email!

...

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Meanwhile, the vaunted, all-powerful Right Wing Noise Machine turns out to be [a guy in Jersey](#) ! ..

PS.: The Kosola controversy offers more proof, if you needed it, of the folly of TimesSelect. Do you doubt that [Chris Suellentrop's initial scoop](#) about Jerome Armstrong's alleged stock **touting** would be march harder for the Kositburo to bottle up if it hadn't been stuck behind the TimesSelect subscription wall? I'd say TimesSelect cut its impact by at least 50%. You'd think the guy who guided the disastrous Times Select experiment would get kicked to the side and given an assignment in far-off Asia, where he could do little further damage, instead of ...

[oh wait](#) P.P.S.: The official [NYT memo announcing Len Apcar's new assignment](#) does not contain, in the section boasting of his many accomplishments, the sentence "He initiated TimesSelect." Kf's subtle Pravda-like reading of the memo therefore extracts this meaning: TimesSelect is dead. They'll pull the plug within a year. ... See also: [Excellent posts](#) at Red State, where "Trevino" notes a) that Kos & Co. are behaving like "the Armstrong revelations have them scared," and b) there have long been suspicions about Kosola-esque dealings, and they've been "more on the left ... than the right." ... 10:11 P.M. [link](#) Tuesday, June 20, 2006

Kosolafest , 2006: Jim Geraghty has posted a ["comprehensive Kos-Armstrong" timeline](#) , which he claims shows an "interesting pattern." (The pattern: Buy one, get one free!) ... I [debate the issue with Bob Wright here](#) . Wright pooh-poohs the scandal. I say you don't have to have illegality to have corruption, and this situation reeks of corruption. ... [Joyner](#) tends to the Wright view, claiming there's only "one strike" against Kos. ... What about [Ohio](#) ? 12:40 P.M. [link](#)

No Time For NEXIS! Krugman's Hours [Too Valuable](#) **:

Thus in 2004, President **Bush** basically ran as America's defender against gay married terrorists. He waited until after the election to reveal that what he really wanted to do was privatize Social Security.

--"Class War Politics," Paul Krugman, [New York Times, June 19, 2006](#) , Page 19. [Emphasis added]

President **Bush**'s vision of an "ownership society" is built, as much as anything else, on a sweeping promise: that he will transform Social Security so younger workers can divert some of their payroll taxes into private investment accounts. At a rally in Pennsylvania last week, Mr. **Bush** declared, as he does at almost every campaign stop nowadays, that "younger workers ought to be able to take some of their taxes and set up a personal savings account, an account that they can call their own, an account that the government cannot take away and an account that they can pass on from one generation to the next."

--"**Bush** Revisiting Social Security, And Fight Is On," by Robin Toner and David Rosenbaum, New York Times, September 17, 2004, Front Page. [Emphasis added]

--This is an inaccurate shot, of course. Krugman doesn't need to check NEXIS--he remembers perfectly well that **Bush campaigned on his Social Security **plan**. On October 19, a few weeks before the election, Krugman himself wrote that he'd "never believed Mr. **Bush**'s budget promises" in part because "his broader policy goals, including the partial privatization of Social Security -- which is clearly on his agenda for a second term--would involve large costs" [Emphasis added] **Bush**'s **plan** was misguided and costly, but it was hardly hidden from voters. 4:21 A.M. [link](#)

A [stunningly cynical move](#) by **Senate** Democrats. ... Note: The posturing Dems [opposed amnesty](#) for all Iraqis "who have attacked ... members of the U.S. Armed Forces," not just those who've actually killed Americans. [Emphasis added] That would seem to rule out amnesty for most of the insurgents the Iraqi government is trying to win over, no? 3:45 A.M.

Monday, June 19, 2006

Influence Peddler [dissents](#) from the [emerging](#) herd [wisdom](#) that--thanks to the unpopularity of the **Senate**'s legalization approach with actual voters--there will be no immigration bill before the election. Thanks to

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the unpopularity of the **Senate's** legalization approach with actual voters there will be a bill, IP predicts. It will be a House-style, enforcement-oriented bill that will give Democrats fits. According to this theory, which I buy, Speaker Hastert's current intransigence is a feint. ... P.S.: But isn't the House-**Senate** conference committee stacked with pro-legalization types? IP explains [why this is not an insoluble problem](#) 6:34 P.M.

Friday, June 16, 2006

It's a Connecticut Thing: [Ryan Sager thinks Joe Lieberman's new campaign ad is awful](#) . So does [Josh Marshall](#) . You make the call. ... P.S.: It seems juvenile to me. But doesn't its effectiveness hinge on whether (and how much) Connecticut Democrats hate Lowell Weicker? ... Update: The ad [revives a cartoon Lieberman used 18 years ago](#) , and may be designed to remind state voters why they elected Lieberman in the first place. ... 3:19 P.M.

Touting Mark Warner--Suellentrop's Secret Scooplet: If the NYT's Chris Suellentrop [had a scooplet about Kos crony/Mark Warner payee Jerome Armstrong and the S.E.C.](#) but nobody read it--because it a) wasn't in the NYT print edition and b) on the Web it was stuck behind the TimesSelect subscription wall--would it make a sound? ... Update: [Not total silence.](#) ... But [not totally behind the subscription wall](#) either. ... More: [The Plank](#) has an excerpt:

[S]ome people ... compare the blog boomlet [Kos and Armstrong] **helped** create for Dean to the work of online bulletin-board posters who **touted** dodgy Internet stocks during the boom market without disclosing that they were being paid for their words.

Which, interestingly, is precisely what the Securities and Exchange Commission, in court documents filed last August, alleges that Jerome Armstrong did in 2000. (The original S.E.C. complaint is [here](#) .) In a subsequent filing, the S.E.C. alleges that "there is sufficient evidence to infer that the defendants secretly agreed to pay Armstrong for his **touting** efforts" on the financial Web site Raging Bull.

Without admitting or denying anything, Armstrong has agreed to a permanent injunction that forbids him from **touting** stocks in the future. The S.E.C. remains in litigation with him over the subject of potential monetary penalties.

Next question--Suellentrop's Props: If Suellentrop breaks a story behind the TimesSelect wall, and the story gets out, will he get credit for his scoop? Not [here](#) TimesSelect could become a secluded free-fishing zone for reporters from other publications. In this case, the TimesSelect wall lets the New York Post get credit for a New York Times scoop. Good work, Pinch! ... Caveat: Is it really possible that this story didn't come out in late 2003, when Armstrong is said by the Post to have "signed off on" the settlement of the S.E.C. charges? I can't find a mention on Nexis or in Wikipedia, but I have a vague memory of something like this I'd check Suellentrop's published version again ... if I could get to it. But it seems to have re-disappeared behind the TimesSelect wall. Another example of TimesSelect inhibiting the blogosphere's search for truth! ...

More: [Here's a roundup of blog reactions](#) , including [agonizing Kossacks](#) ! ... 2:45 P.M. [Updated 6/18]
[link](#)

[Bloggingheads](#) --Bob Wright's videoblog project. [Gearbox](#) --Searching for the Semi-Orgasmic Lock-in.
[Drudge Report](#) --80 % true. Close enough! [Instapundit](#) --All-powerful hit king. [Joshua Marshall](#) -
-He reports! And decides! [Wonkette](#) --Makes Jack Shafer feel guilty. [Salon](#) -- Survives! kf
gloating on hold. [Andrew Sullivan](#) --He asks, he tells. He sells! [David Corn](#) --Trustworthy reporting
from the left. [Washington Monthly](#) --Includes Charlie Peters' proto-blog. [Lucianne.com](#) --Stirs the
drink. [Virginia Postrel](#) -- Friend of the future! [Peggy Noonan](#) -- Gold in every column. [Matt
Miller](#) --Savvy rad-centrism. [WaPo](#) --Waking from post-Bradlee snooze. [Keller's Calmer Times](#) --
Registration required. [NY Observer](#) --Read it before the good writers are all hired away. [New](#)

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[Republic](#) --Left on welfare, right on warfare! [Jim Pinkerton](#) -- Quality ideas come from quantity ideas.
[Tom Tomorrow](#) --Everyone's favorite leftish cartoonists' blog. [Ann "Too Far" Coulter](#) --Sometimes it's just far enough.
[Bull Moose](#) -- National Greatness Central. [John Ellis](#) --Forget that Florida business! The cuz knows politics, and he has, ah, sources.
["The Note"](#) --How the pros start their day. [Romenesko](#) -- O.K. they actually start it here. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) --Money Liberal Central.
[Steve Chapman](#) --Ornery-but-lovable libertarian. [Rich Galen](#) --Sophisticated GOP insider.
[Man Without Qualities](#) --Seems to know a lot about white collar crime. Hmmm.
[Overlawyered.com](#) --Daily horror stories. [Eugene Volokh](#) --Smart, packin' prof, and not Instapundit!
[Eve Tushnet](#) --Queer, Catholic, conservative and not Andrew Sullivan! [WSJ's Best of the Web](#) --James Taranto's excellent obsessions.
[Walter Shapiro](#) --Politics and (don't laugh) neoliberal humor! [Eric Alterman](#) --Born to blog.
[Joe Conason](#) --**Bush**-bashing, free most days. [Lloyd Grove](#) --Don't let him write about you.
[Arianna's Huffosphere](#) --Now a whole fleet of hybrid vehicles. [TomPaine.com](#) --Web-lib populists.
[Take on the News](#) --TomPaine's blog. [B-Log](#) --Blog of spirituality! [Hit & Run](#) --Reason gone wild!
[Daniel Weintraub](#) --Beeblogger and Davis Recall Central. [Eduwonk](#) --You'll never have to read another mind-numbing education story again.
[Nonzero](#) -- Bob Wright explains it all. [John Leo](#) --If you've got political correctness, he's got a column ... [More tk]

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