

March 25, 2015

Walter Russell Mead posts on President Ahab and "the great white whale."

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With the House nearly united against him, can Obama still stand? Today, 360 Representatives (including more than half of the House's Democrats) sent a letter to the President warning that permanent sanctions relief for Iran must entail new legislation from Congress. [More](#) from The Hill:

"In reviewing such an agreement, Congress must be convinced that its terms foreclose any pathway to a bomb, and only then will Congress be able to consider permanent sanctions relief," [the letter] adds.

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The Dem-supported House letter isn't the only high-profile rebuke to emerge today from the President's camp. President Obama's old CIA director is saying that the Iran-backed Shia militias are worse news than ISIS. In an [interview](#) with the Washington Post, General Petraeus was blunt: ...

Walter Jacobson of Legal Insurrection claims he has the back story to the president's Bibi tantrum.

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None of those issues justified the complete fury coming from the administration. It just didn't add up.

Now The Wall Street Journal reveals the back story — one in which the Israelis found out about secret negotiations and secret details concealed from Congress, and told Congress. Now the administration is promising long-term damage to Israel that will last beyond this administration.

It also becomes obvious that the meme that Netanyahu has been acting to help his reelection is wrong. There is a long history of Israel trying to stop a disastrous deal being negotiated in secret. Netanyahu's opposition has been based on security concerns for years, not the recent election.

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That title, however, is not really the story. The story is that Israel learned not only that Obama was hiding secret Iran nuclear negotiations from Israel, but also later found out details that Israel shared with Congress. The article is lengthy, and behind the paywall.

Here is the intro: ...

Yesterday we closed with a review of Shelby Steele's latest book. We pick up the same thread in a Daily Beast article on the "last sane liberal." It's about Patrick Moynihan who foresaw 50 years ago what the havoc the left/liberals would wreck on all families; black and white.

The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan is being vindicated—fifty years too late. His once-infamous March 1965 “Moynihan Report,” is now considered prophetic, anticipating the dissolution of the American family, and not just in African-American communities. But for all the New York Times talk about “When Liberals Blew It,” as Nicholas Kristof boldly put it, liberals—and most Americans—are still blowing it. Until we confront the modern confusion between liberalism and libertinism, Moynihan's true warnings will go unheeded, and American society will continue degenerating.

In 1965, as Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty gained momentum, Moynihan, a 38-year-old Assistant Secretary of Labor, boldly warned about the epidemic of illegitimate African-American births. The “deterioration of the Negro family” ensnared blacks in a “tangle of pathology.”

Anticipating the next half-century of social tensions, Moynihan noted that establishing legal rights was not enough, the challenge was ensuring equal opportunity. “The most difficult fact for white Americans to understand,” he wrote, was that economically and even socially “the circumstances of the Negro American community in recent years has probably been getting worse, not better.” The once stable black families of the 1950s disintegrated, as the same openness that boosted the civil rights movement also undermined traditional family structure for blacks and whites, weakening community structures and strictures.

By 1990, the percentage of black children born to unmarried mothers hit 70 percent. Thanks to this all-American values breakdown, with sexual expression trumping traditional repression, today, over 40 percent of all American births are to unmarried mothers. Many of the 50th anniversary pieces have noted that, while any particular family configuration can work, collectively, the key variable separating America's privileged and troubled kids is whether they are raised in two-parent families or single-mother households. ...

Another foolish left/liberal idea that punishes the poor are the minimum wage laws. **Thomas Sowell** writes on the current experiment in San Francisco.

... A recent story in a San Francisco newspaper says that some restaurants and grocery stores in Oakland's Chinatown have closed after the city's minimum wage was raised. Other small businesses there are not sure they are going to survive, since many depend on a thin profit margin and a high volume of sales.

At an angry meeting between local small business owners and city officials, the local organization that had campaigned for the higher minimum wage was absent. They were probably some place congratulating themselves on having passed a humane "living wage" law. The group most affected was also absent — inexperienced and unskilled young people, who need a job to get some experience, even more than they need the money.

It is not a breakthrough on the frontiers of knowledge that minimum wage laws reduce employment opportunities for the young and the unskilled of any age. It has been happening around the world, for generation after generation, and in the most diverse countries.

It is not just the young who are affected when minimum wage rates are set according to the fashionable notions of third parties, with little or no regard for whether everyone is productive enough to be worth paying the minimum wage they set.

You can check this out for yourself. Go to your local public library and pick up a copy of the distinguished British magazine "The Economist."

Whether it is the current issue or a back issue doesn't matter. Spain, Greece and South Africa will be easy to locate in the table near the back, which lists data for various countries. Just look down the unemployment column for countries with unemployment rates around 25 percent. Spain, Greece and South Africa are always there, whether or not there is a recession. Why? Because they have very generous minimum wage laws. ...

Kevin Williamson writes on the fact challenged president.

'Can I trust what the president says? That's a yes-or-no question.' So inquired U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in response to having been lied to by the Obama administration. The administration wants to use a presidential decree to enact an amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants; half of the states have rallied behind Texas in arguing that this is unconstitutional, that the president is arrogating to himself a legislative power that is properly Congress's. Lawyers for the Justice Department, led by Kathleen Hartnett, assured the court that no action on DAPA — Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents — would be taken until Judge Hanen had made a ruling on whether to issue an injunction against it.

"Like an idiot, I believed that," the judge says.

The Obama administration, being what it is, ignored its promise to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas and began handing out reprieves as fast as it could, issuing more than 100,000 of them. When the annoyed judge demanded to know why the Department of Justice had lied to a federal court, Hartnett argued that the reprieves were being handed out under a different set of guidelines. The judge was not buying it. Among other things, the administration is offering three-year grants of immunity, which are not authorized by the earlier authority under which it purports to be operating.

It is easy to understand why the administration is in a hurry to sign up as many people for its illegal amnesty as it can: The more beneficiaries there are, the more difficult it becomes to revoke the amnesty, even when it is confirmed as being illegal and unconstitutional. Judge Hanen already has sided with the states on a substantial issue, handing down that injunction he had been considering.

That Barack Obama and those he holds near have a funny way with the truth is not news. The president famously claimed in a speech in 2007 that the great civil-rights march in Selma, Ala., led to his conception: “There was something stirring across the country because of what happened in Selma, Alabama, because some folks are willing to march across a bridge. So they got together and Barack Obama Jr. was born. So don’t tell me I don’t have a claim on Selma, Alabama.” He was in fact born years before that march happened — his parents were divorced by the time of the march — but one can see how such mythology would appeal to a man with Barack Obama’s messianic pretensions. ...

American Interest

Captain Obama and the Great White Whale

by Walter Russell Mead

President Obama perseveres, convinced that everyone will thank him when the Great White Whale of Middle East policy—a lasting nuclear deal with Iran—is finally harpooned. But as the endgame draws nigh, a unified chorus of naysayers is rising in volume.

With the House nearly united against him, can Obama still stand? Today, 360 Representatives (including more than half of the House’s Democrats) sent a letter to the President warning that permanent sanctions relief for Iran must entail new legislation from Congress. [More](#) from The Hill:

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The Dem-supported House letter isn't the only high-profile rebuke to emerge today from the President's camp. President Obama's old CIA director is saying that the Iran-backed Shia militias are worse news than ISIS. In an [interview](#) with the *Washington Post*, General Petraeus was blunt:

The current Iranian regime is not our ally in the Middle East. It is ultimately part of the problem, not the solution. The more the Iranians are seen to be dominating the region, the more it is going to inflame Sunni radicalism and fuel the rise of groups like the Islamic State. While the U.S. and Iran may have convergent interests in the defeat of Daesh, our interests generally diverge. The Iranian response to the open hand offered by the U.S. has not been encouraging.

Iranian power in the Middle East is thus a double problem. It is foremost problematic because it is deeply hostile to us and our friends. But it is also dangerous because, the more it is felt, the more it sets off reactions that are also harmful to our interests — Sunni radicalism and, if we aren't careful, the prospect of nuclear proliferation as well.

The Petraeus interview and the mass defections of House Dems highlight the degree to which Obama is going out on a limb on Iran policy. But this isn't just a matter of Beltway elites jumping ship. John Kraushaar [analyzed the Iran poll numbers](#) in the *National Journal* and made a convincing argument that the public, while it supports negotiating with Iran as a general proposition, doesn't think President Obama has gotten it right. A recent NBC/WSJ poll finds that 71% of respondents think the deal won't do what it's supposed to and keep Tehran from getting the bomb. This is why so many members of the President's own party are jumping ship. Nobody wants to be on this boat, but Ahab is still at the wheel, pursuing the Great White Whale at all costs.

One has to think back almost 100 years to Wilson chasing his Treaty of Versailles in the face of growing public skepticism and Congressional dissent to see this many omens of a car crash. The more the opposition mounts, the more grimly determined the President becomes to hold his course. The more determined the President looks, the more disquieting the doubts that circulate among Democrats—and the more Republicans smell the opportunity to land a crippling blow against a policy they despise.

There seem to be four leading scenarios on the horizon. One is that the President gets his deal, somehow steers it past (or around) Congress, and the deal works: Iran becomes our friend and the Middle East gets better. At that point he looks like a genius and the doubts are forgotten. The critics look bad as the United States sails into a bright new day, and President Obama goes down in history as a courageous and visionary peacemaker who stuck to his guns when the going got tough. This seems unlikely, but it can't be ruled out.

The second is uglier, but more probable. In this scenario, Iran signs a deal, and after an ugly fight, Congress gives it a grudging and perhaps partial OK. Then pundits and policymakers argue for years about whether it was a success or not, the public mostly dislikes it, and the Iran deal, like Obamacare, becomes a pyrrhic victory. The President notches up a win but his party stumbles under the weight of the baggage.

The third possibility is uglier and, based on today's news from Congress, more probable still. In this scenario, Iran and the President strike a deal, but Congress succeeds in crippling it. Perhaps it passes a bill and then overrides his veto; perhaps it refuses to pass enabling legislation that the Iranians say is necessary. At that point, the deal breaks down, some of the P-5 begin to circumvent the sanctions, and the President will have a big mess on his hands as Iran, perhaps, accelerates its march toward a bomb.

The final possibility is that the Iranians walk away from the deal. That is not a worst case scenario for the President; if there isn't any deal he doesn't have to consume the next several months of his presidency in an all-out effort to protect it from Congress. The biggest downside: He will then have to start from close to zero on Middle East policy, and presumably head back to some angry, jilted allies for help even as relations with Iran grow worse.

The President himself gives 50-50 odds for a deal at this point; if he's right, and if we assume that the other scenarios are equally probable, he has about a 17 percent chance of emerging from this process with a clear win, a 17 percent chance of a pyrrhic victory, and a 67 percent chance of an outcome that will be considered a defeat.

The President's biggest remaining advantage is that a significant part of the pro-Obama wing of the Democratic press and pundit establishment are still looking at the Middle East in a compartmentalized way. They don't get the causal connection between the quest for an Iran deal and regional disorder. So caught up are they in the "Negotiations always good, confrontation always bad" worldview that they haven't come to grips with the reality that in the Middle East, Obama's regional strategy of withdrawal and accommodation to Iran undermines rather than supports the goal of a nuclear deal.

Thus, instead of criticizing Obama's policy incoherence and the way in which his chosen strategies undercut his stated goals, such observers frame the whole issue as whether it's better to try to reach a nuclear deal with Iran than to just let hostility fester while the Islamic Republic comes closer to its nuclear goals. Stated this way, it's easy to make a case for the White House approach even as the shadows deepen and the region burns — and this is the line that the remaining loyalists take.

But more and more people in the center are beginning to see beyond the pretty packaging and to ask questions the White House doesn't seem to be able to answer about its overall plan. Thomas Friedman [looked askance](#) at the President this week, asking "Why are we, for the third time since 9/11, fighting a war on behalf of Iran?" Henry Kissinger's most recent book contains a long warning against the course we are on. Jeffrey Goldberg, anything but a knee-jerk opponent of the President, has been voicing his growing worries over the cost of the deal—most recently [declaring](#) that there's "no solution" when it comes to Iran, very much including a nuclear deal. Former Administration officials are aghast; like Martin Indyk [before him](#), what David Petraeus is really saying is that President's strategy doesn't cohere.

Yet Ahab sails on, convinced that the crew will thank him when the Great White Whale is finally harpooned. The crew hopes he is right, but faith is ebbing as the endgame draws nigh.

Legal Insurrection

[Obama furious Israel found out Iran nuke deal secrets and told Congress](#)

Wall Street Journal reports: The back story emerges — Obama hid negotiations and details, from Israel and Congress.

by William Jacobson

The Obama administration has vented its fury at Israel based on Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to Congress, and pre-election statements.

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Now The Wall Street Journal reveals the back story — one in which the Israelis found out about secret negotiations and secret details concealed from Congress, and told Congress. Now the administration is promising long-term damage to Israel that will last beyond this administration.

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Here is the intro:

Soon after the U.S. and other major powers entered negotiations last year to curtail Iran's nuclear program, senior White House officials learned Israel was spying on the closed-door talks....

In addition to eavesdropping, Israel acquired information from confidential U.S. briefings, informants and diplomatic contacts in Europe, the officials said.

The espionage didn't upset the White House as much as Israel's sharing of inside information with U.S. lawmakers and others to drain support from a high-stakes deal intended to limit Iran's nuclear program, current and former officials said.

"It is one thing for the U.S. and Israel to spy on each other. It is another thing for Israel to steal U.S. secrets and play them back to U.S. legislators to undermine U.S. diplomacy," said a senior U.S. official briefed on the matter.

The U.S. and Israel, longtime allies who routinely swap information on security threats, sometimes operate behind the scenes like spy-versus-spy rivals. The White House has largely tolerated Israeli snooping on U.S. policy makers—a posture Israel takes when the tables are turned.

The White House discovered the operation, in fact, when U.S. intelligence agencies spying on Israel intercepted communications among Israeli officials that carried details the U.S. believed could have come only from access to the confidential talks, officials briefed on the matter said.

Israeli officials denied spying directly on U.S. negotiators and said they received their information through other means, including close surveillance of Iranian leaders receiving the latest U.S. and European offers. European officials, particularly the French, also have been more transparent with Israel about the closed-door discussions than the Americans, Israeli and U.S. officials said.

What really set off Obama was that Israel later found out details that Israel shared with Congress, that the Obama administration had not:

As secret talks with Iran progressed into 2013, U.S. intelligence agencies monitored Israel's communications to see if the country knew of the negotiations. Mr. Obama didn't tell Mr. Netanyahu until September 2013.

Israeli officials, who said they had already learned about the talks through their own channels, told their U.S. counterparts they were upset about being excluded. " 'Did the administration really believe we wouldn't find out?' " Israeli officials said, according to a former U.S. official.

The episode cemented Mr. Netanyahu's concern that Mr. Obama was bent on clinching a deal with Iran whether or not it served Israel's best interests, Israeli officials said. Obama administration officials said the president was committed to preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Dermer started lobbying U.S. lawmakers just before the U.S. and other powers signed an interim agreement with Iran in November 2013. Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Dermer went to Congress after seeing they had little influence on the White House.

Before the interim deal was made public, Mr. Dermer gave lawmakers Israel's analysis: The U.S. offer would dramatically undermine economic sanctions on Iran, according to congressional officials who took part.

Israel apparently shared more information with Congress than the administration, though Israel denies sharing any information that was classified:

The information in the briefings, Israeli officials said, was widely known among the countries participating in the negotiations.

When asked in February during one briefing where Israel got its inside information, the Israeli officials said their sources included the French and British governments, as well as their own intelligence, according to people there.

"Ambassador Dermer never shared confidential intelligence information with members of Congress," Mr. Sagui said. "His briefings did not include specific details from the negotiations, including the length of the agreement or the number of centrifuges Iran would be able to keep."

Current and former U.S. officials confirmed that the number and type of centrifuges cited in the briefings were part of the discussions. But they said the briefings were misleading because

Israeli officials didn't disclose concessions asked of Iran. Those included giving up stockpiles of nuclear material, as well as modifying the advanced centrifuges to slow output, these officials said.

The administration didn't brief lawmakers on the centrifuge numbers and other details at the time because the information was classified and the details were still in flux, current and former U.S. officials said.

Now it's all making sense. The Israelis saw Obama acting deceptively, hiding negotiations that would affect Israel's existence, and giving away the store to the Iranians.

Netanyahu saw no choice but to go to Congress both through the Israeli ambassador and the speech to Congress, knowing that it would harm Israel with the administration.

This was not something done for election purposes.

The feelings in the Obama administration have gone beyond bitter:

"People feel personally sold out," a senior administration official said. "That's where the Israelis really better be careful because a lot of these people will not only be around for this administration but possibly the next one as well." ...

"If you're wondering whether something serious has shifted here, the answer is yes," a senior U.S. official said. "These things leave scars."

I'm genuinely gobsmacked at this quote in the [@WSJ](#). I wonder what Hillary Clinton thinks. <http://t.co/0KAAImYACP> pic.twitter.com/4d0KwuH9tI

— **Daniel Drezner** (@dandrezner) [March 24, 2015](#)

[.@dandrezner](#) [@maggieNYT](#) [@WSJ](#) A quote that shows ignorance of HRC. She has never been as instinctively repelled by Israel as Pres. Obama.

— **Joe Scarborough** (@JoeNBC) [March 24, 2015](#)

Daily Beast

[The Last Sane Liberal](#)

Daniel Moynihan predicted the breakdown of everyday American values in black families 50 years ago. Why are so many of us still unwilling to admit that what he said applies to all families?

by Gil Troy



The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan is being vindicated—fifty years too late. His once-infamous March 1965 “Moynihan Report,” is now considered prophetic, anticipating the dissolution of the American family, and not just in African-American communities. But for all the *New York Times* talk about [“When Liberals Blew It,”](#) as Nicholas Kristof boldly put it, liberals—and most Americans—are still blowing it. Until we confront the modern confusion between liberalism and libertinism, Moynihan’s true warnings will go unheeded, and American society will continue degenerating.

In 1965, as Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty gained momentum, Moynihan, a 38-year-old Assistant Secretary of Labor, boldly warned about the epidemic of illegitimate African-American births. The “deterioration of the Negro family” ensnared blacks in a “tangle of pathology.”

Anticipating the next half-century of social tensions, Moynihan noted that establishing legal rights was not enough, the challenge was ensuring equal opportunity. “The most difficult fact for white Americans to understand,” he wrote, was that economically and even socially “the circumstances of the Negro American community in recent years has probably been getting

worse, not better.” The once stable black families of the 1950s disintegrated, as the same openness that boosted the civil rights movement also undermined traditional family structure for blacks and whites, weakening community structures and strictures.

By 1990, the percentage of black children born to unmarried mothers hit 70 percent. Thanks to this all-American values breakdown, with sexual expression trumping traditional repression, today, over 40 percent of all American births are to unmarried mothers. Many of the 50th anniversary pieces [have noted](#) that, while any particular family configuration can work, collectively, the key variable separating America’s privileged and troubled kids is whether they are raised in two-parent families or single-mother households.

Most Moynihan Report anniversary discussions have gone this far, contrasting the ugly accusations calling Moynihan racist with modern studies validating the warm, supportive traditional family—once-conventional wisdom now grudgingly accepted only because data confirms it.

However, Moynihan’s Report—and his vision—went further. Especially after enduring the backlash, Moynihan feared for liberalism’s future. The New Deal-based, rational, problem-solving liberalism he believed in had spawned a fanatic, self-righteous, nihilistic, and libertine identity-driven aberration.

As the 1960s spun out of control yet went mainstream, Moynihan soured on the New Left. Internationally, the “totalitarian-left” privileged non-white, non-Western dictators’ whims over democrats. Domestically, “the liberal-left” simply privileged individual whims, emphasizing rights not responsibilities, indulging impulses rather than fostering order. Moynihan would remain a liberal, serving as New York’s Senator from 1977 until 2001. But he would continue combatting the Far Left’s licentiousness and unruliness until his death on March 26, 2003, ten days after his 76th birthday.

The sexual revolution and its attendant earthquake in values galloped along with the civil rights and feminist revolutions. In this modernizing mishmash, it was hard to sift the beneficial from the harmful. Many liberals concluded that the admirable moral codes of yesteryear were too entangled with its racism, sexism, and suffocating conformism to save.

Alas, this cultural hurricane was socially devastating. Moynihan’s worst fears became common phenomena. His “tangle of pathology” entwined both blacks and whites. “Broken families” became mainstreamed along with the troubles they spawned, including the Great American Crime wave, the breakdown of public schools, and the if-it-feels-good-do-it culture.

The 1960s’ cultural, social, and political wildness triggered Ronald Reagan’s counter-revolution. By 1981, despite the “Culture War” talk, Republicans indulged in the sexual revolution’s forbidden fruits as much as Democrats. Reagan himself was the first divorced president, with a famously dysfunctional family. Reagan’s ally William Bennett reconciled Republican rhetoric and behavior by endorsing “constructive hypocrisy,” appreciating the value of having standards even if you deviated from them. Consumerism, materialism, individualism, entrepreneurship, the antigovernment impulse, the information age, capitalism itself, helped dissolve traditional sensibilities, fostering an American hedonism. Reaganites never acknowledged how much their own ideology undermined the very traditions they tried preserving.

By the 1980s, some liberals started resisting the lure of licentiousness. Communitarian thinkers including George Washington University’s Amitai Etzioni and Harvard’s Michael Sandel

resurrected a liberalism fostering traditional community, not just individual autonomy. What became “Third Way” Democratic politicians founded the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) to save liberalism from itself, celebrating community, opportunity, and responsibility.

By 1993, mourning the “manifest decline of the American civic order” Moynihan complained in *The American Scholar* that Americans were “[defining deviancy down](#).” When mobsters killed seven gangsters in Chicago, it so offended American sensibilities of 1929 it became the legendary St. Valentine’s Day Massacre. Now, the criminologist James Q. Wilson said Los Angeles suffered an “equivalent every weekend.” Despite such assaults, “our response is curiously passive,” Moynihan mourned. We were accepting the unacceptable.

While fighting this libertine liberalism and its consequences, Moynihan did not just blame American culture. He pushed for innovative programs, including his pet initiative to limit gun-related murders by limiting ammunition. Moynihan mocked the NRA by saying, “Guns don’t kill people, bullets do.”

When the DLC’s poster child, Bill Clinton, became president, hoping to renew America with a new balance, rooted in tradition and family values while celebrating progress and pluralism. Yes, Clinton compartmentalized, distinguishing between what he believed was best for America and how he actually behaved, but when addressing 5,000 African-American preachers in Memphis, Tennessee, the new president championed “changes we can make from the outside in”—government programs—buttressed by “changes we’re going to have to make from the inside out, or the others won’t matter.”

Despite his own character flaws, and despite testy relations with Moynihan, Clinton pushed hard for the drops in crime, drug use, premarital sex, divorce, and abortion that have led to today’s old-new conclusions frowning on such behaviors, especially at epidemic levels. Yet, as the partial embrace this month of the Moynihan Report reflects, Americans, especially mainstream media types and leading intellectuals, still fear embracing old fashioned morality out of fear of endorsing the fundamentalist, Reaganite, racist-sexist agenda. As a result, the moral reformation America and modern liberalism still need has proceeded fitfully.

Every day the media burlesque spotlights an American with too much binge-drinking, drug abuse, sexual violence, family breakdown, celebrity worship, and psychic pain. America’s soul hurts partially because we lack moral anchors in our new, ultra-liberal and libertine Republic of Nothing. Modern liberalism remains too entwined with media-fueled, and now Internet-operated, nihilism. Millions of us, and some of our leading thinkers, may have started rediscovering the value of tradition, but have yet to embrace the traditional values that anchored and guided our parents and grandparents—or a valuable new tradition.

Jewish World Review **[Ruinous Compassion](#)**

by Thomas Sowell

It is fascinating to see brilliant people belatedly discover the obvious — and to see an even larger number of brilliant people never discover the obvious.

A recent story in a San Francisco newspaper says that some restaurants and grocery stores in Oakland’s Chinatown have closed after the city’s minimum wage was raised. Other small

businesses there are not sure they are going to survive, since many depend on a thin profit margin and a high volume of sales.

At an angry meeting between local small business owners and city officials, the local organization that had campaigned for the higher minimum wage was absent. They were probably some place congratulating themselves on having passed a humane "living wage" law. The group most affected was also absent — inexperienced and unskilled young people, who need a job to get some experience, even more than they need the money.

It is not a breakthrough on the frontiers of knowledge that minimum wage laws reduce employment opportunities for the young and the unskilled of any age. It has been happening around the world, for generation after generation, and in the most diverse countries.

It is not just the young who are affected when minimum wage rates are set according to the fashionable notions of third parties, with little or no regard for whether everyone is productive enough to be worth paying the minimum wage they set.

You can check this out for yourself. Go to your local public library and pick up a copy of the distinguished British magazine "The Economist."

Whether it is the current issue or a back issue doesn't matter. Spain, Greece and South Africa will be easy to locate in the table near the back, which lists data for various countries. Just look down the unemployment column for countries with unemployment rates around 25 percent. Spain, Greece and South Africa are always there, whether or not there is a recession. Why? Because they have very generous minimum wage laws.

While you are there, you can look up the unemployment rate for Switzerland, which has no minimum wage law at all. Over the years, I have never seen the unemployment rate in Switzerland reach as high as 4 percent. Back in 2003, "The Economist" magazine reported: "Switzerland's unemployment neared a five-year high of 3.9% in February."

In the United States, back in what liberals think of as the bad old days before there was a federal minimum wage law, the annual unemployment rate during Calvin Coolidge's last four years as president ranged from a high of 4.2 percent to a low of 1.8 percent.

Low-income minorities are often hardest hit by the unemployment that follows in the wake of minimum wage laws. The last year when the black unemployment rate was lower than the white unemployment rate was 1930, the last year before there was a federal minimum wage law.

The following year, the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 was passed, requiring minimum wages in the construction industry. This was in response to complaints that construction companies with non-union black construction workers were able to underbid construction companies with unionized white workers (whose unions would not admit blacks).

Looking back over my own life, I realize now how lucky I was when I left home in 1948, at the age of 17, to become self-supporting. The unemployment rate for 16- and 17-year-old blacks at that time was under 10 percent. Inflation had made the minimum wage law, passed ten years earlier, irrelevant.

But it was only a matter of time before liberal compassion led to repeated increases in the minimum wage, to keep up with inflation. The annual unemployment rate for black teenagers has never been less than 20 percent in the past 50 years, and has ranged as high as over 50 percent.

You can check these numbers in a table of official government statistics on page 42 of Professor Walter Williams' book "Race and Economics."

Incidentally, the black-white gap in unemployment rates for 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds was virtually non-existent back in 1948. But the black teenage unemployment rate has been more than double that for white teenagers for every year since 1971.

This is just one of many policies that allow liberals to go around feeling good about themselves, while leaving havoc in their wake.

National Review

[The Real Price of Lies](#)

There can be no free society without trust.

By Kevin D. Williamson

‘Can I trust what the president says? That’s a yes-or-no question.’ So inquired U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in response to having been lied to by the Obama administration. The administration wants to use a presidential decree to enact an amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants; half of the states have rallied behind Texas in arguing that this is unconstitutional, that the president is arrogating to himself a legislative power that is properly Congress’s. Lawyers for the Justice Department, led by Kathleen Hartnett, assured the court that no action on DAPA — Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents — would be taken until Judge Hanen had made a ruling on whether to issue an injunction against it.

“Like an idiot, I believed that,” the judge says.

The Obama administration, being what it is, ignored its promise to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas and began handing out reprieves as fast as it could, issuing more than 100,000 of them. When the annoyed judge demanded to know why the Department of Justice had lied to a federal court, Hartnett argued that the reprieves were being handed out under a different set of guidelines. The judge was not buying it. Among other things, the administration is offering three-year grants of immunity, which are not authorized by the earlier authority under which it purports to be operating.

It is easy to understand why the administration is in a hurry to sign up as many people for its illegal amnesty as it can: The more beneficiaries there are, the more difficult it becomes to revoke the amnesty, even when it is confirmed as being illegal and unconstitutional. Judge Hanen already has sided with the states on a substantial issue, handing down that injunction he had been considering.

That Barack Obama and those he holds near have a funny way with the truth is not news. The president famously claimed in a speech in 2007 that the great civil-rights march in Selma, Ala., led to his conception: “There was something stirring across the country because of what happened in Selma, Alabama, because some folks are willing to march across a bridge. So they got together and Barack Obama Jr. was born. So don’t tell me I don’t have a claim on Selma, Alabama.” He was in fact born years before that march happened — his parents were divorced by the time of the march — but one can see how such mythology would appeal to a man with Barack Obama’s messianic pretensions. (It was fitting that he chose as his first chief of staff a man named “Emanuel.”) About the many more substantive deceptions of his underlings — at the State Department, at the EPA, at the IRS — there is not much new to say.

The moral offense of misleading a federal judge about an enormously consequential matter — and the insult that it carries — should be duly noted, and Judge Hanen is considering sanctions against the DOJ. Let us hope that those sanctions are robust.

But there is a practical matter to consider, too: Effective systems of government require trust, the lifeblood of a liberal, democratic society. Trust is the lubricant that enables widespread social cooperation. Without it, government action — including government action dear to the hearts of progressives, such as welfare programs — become clunky, inefficient, and difficult or impossible to implement.

Consider a private-sector example: In finance, trades can happen instantaneously because there is a high level of trust among trading partners. If every trade had to go through the corporate legal departments on both sides of the deal, it would take weeks or months to make a trade, rather than seconds. This trust can be abused, of course: It occasionally happens that a party who has made a particularly unprofitable trade disavows knowledge of the agreement. (Oliver Stone’s *Wall Street* taught the children of the 1980s to call this a “DK” — “Don’t know.”) To maliciously renege on a trade is considered a lowlife thing to do, to such an extent that miscreants taking that cowardly route are shunned. (When you are so low that Wall Street doesn’t want to do business with you . . .) And shunning works. If a business develops a bad reputation among its partners or customers, it suffers.

We all experience this in everyday life: If Deli X keeps shorting the pastrami on your sandwich — we are in the midst of the Great Pastrami Drought of 2015 — then you take your business somewhere else. If a used-car dealer misleads your friend about the transmission on that 1985 Ford Escort, you don’t buy a car from that dealer.

But when it comes to government, you cannot simply change providers, unless you are Tina Turner or a Facebook gazillionaire. And though a federal judge may hand down sanctions, our ability as citizens to impose discipline on the president of the United States and his minions is limited: There’s a presidential election every four years, there’s impeachment, and that’s pretty much that. The presidency is the ultimate package deal, like a cable-Internet-telephone bundle that cannot be undone. You get a choice between this guy and that guy, and if this guy has misled you — “If you like your health-care plan, you can keep it” — that doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re going to choose that guy instead.

Which is why presidents can get away with lying to us — and worse.

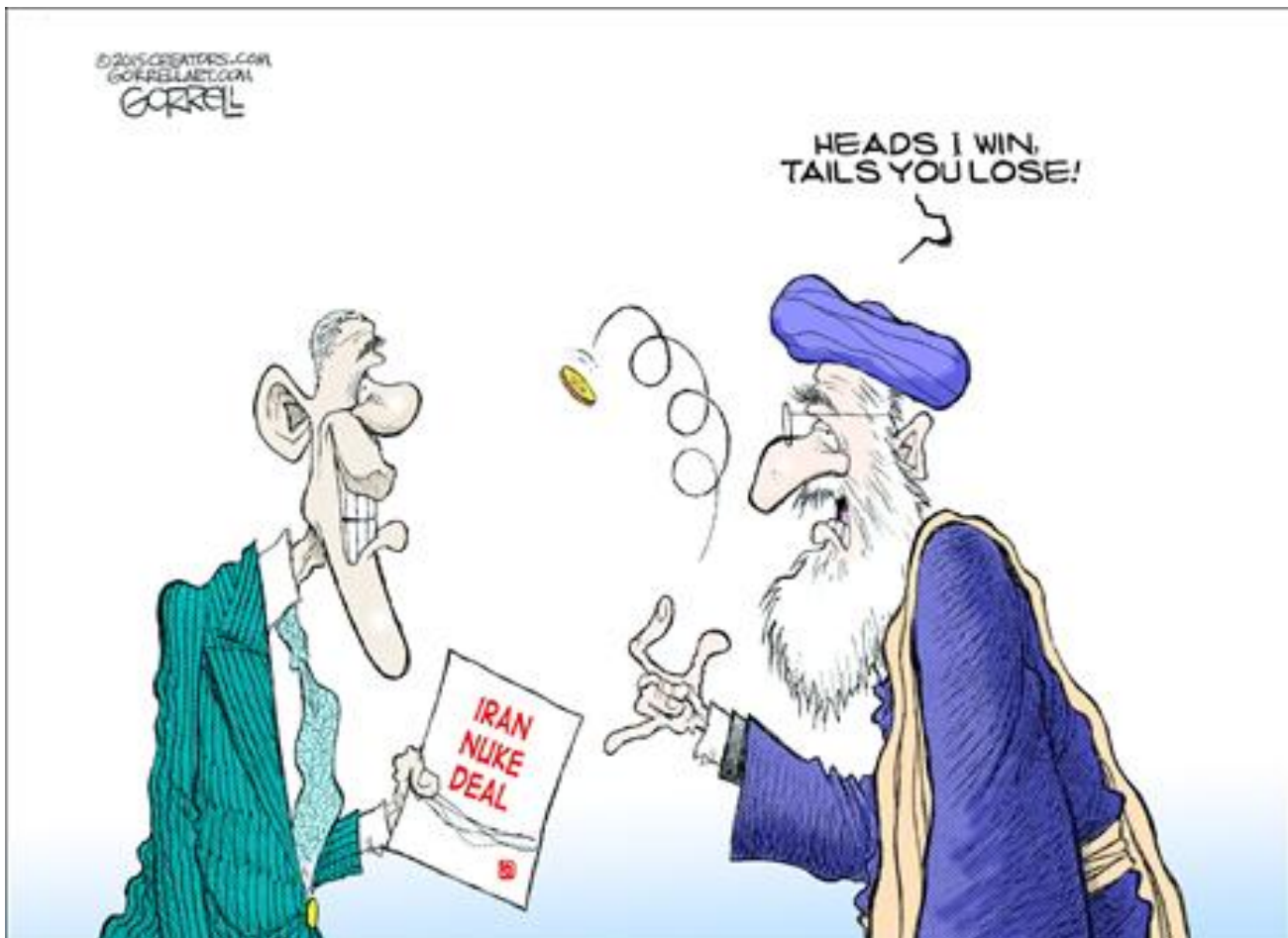
At the micro level, these things become vicious circles: If people abuse welfare programs, then public support for those programs declines. When support declines, government has less reason to offer resources and incentives to ensure that those programs are operated with

honesty and transparency. This invites more abuse, further deterioration in support, and on and on. (There are some illiberal human realities at work there, too: People are more inclined to trust in and cooperate with people who are like them, which is thought to be one of the reasons why the welfare states of Scandinavia, which were until quite recently very homogeneous countries, were relatively successful for so long, and why welfare reform is always a racial issue in the United States.) When there is a sense that the system is corrupt, it is easier to justify taking advantage oneself.

The serial dishonesty of the Obama administration in the near term involves a question about whether we can have honest government. In the long term, the question is whether we can have effective government at all.

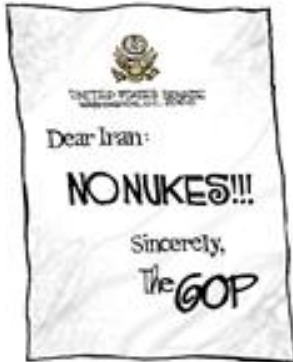
“Can I trust what the president says?”

The terrifying answer is: “No.”



Q: Which is Worse?

GIVING IRAN:



A. A LETTER

B. A NUKE

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