Making it in the Middle Class

The Changing Economics of Family Life in Massachusetts

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Dear Friend:

We are proud to present to you a complimentary copy of the premiere issue of MassINC’s new quarterly magazine, CommonWealth.

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MassINC – the Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth – is a new, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to objective research and clear-headed thinking about how public policy can help restore economic opportunity and upward mobility for middle- and working-class people across Massachusetts.

Like most Americans, we’ve grown increasingly weary of the partisan bickering that seems more concerned with scoring short-term political points and catering to special interests than with solving common problems. MassINC’s central mission is to focus public debate where we think it belongs: on ideas that can improve the economic and social conditions in which middle- and working-class people pursue the American Dream.

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The publication of CommonWealth magazine is one of the primary vehicles by which we hope to reshape today’s political debate – away from the politics of the extremes on the left and right and toward the lunchbucket concerns of ordinary people. Filled with provocative and insightful reporting and commentary, CommonWealth will investigate the way politics, policy and ideas affect the lives of common people throughout Massachusetts.

CommonWealth will take a fresh, objective look at the most difficult problems facing our neighborhoods and families, explore innovative approaches to solving these problems and get us thinking about how we can make a difference. We believe that not all good news is bad news – that the hopeful things happening in our community deserve attention.

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to review our premiere issue and for joining us in this exciting new dialogue.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Kertzman
Founder and Chairman

Tripp Jones
Executive Director
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By linking work, enterprise, and social obligation, and by “creating a ‘we,'” as Innes puts it, “the Bay Colonists created their distinctive economic culture.” The idea of commonwealth was an extension of the mutual cooperation that was seen in the family. In the words of Rev. John Cotton, God meant for humans “to live in Societies, first of Family, Secondly Church, and Thirdly, Common-wealth.”

It hardly needs to be said that we are a long way down the road from Puritan America. Innes notes that the clergy’s sermons in those days were by far the dominant form of public discourse. In fact, he cites an estimate that the average New England churchgoer heard approximately 7,000 sermons in his or her lifetime, totaling some 15,000 hours of listening. Compare that figure to the time today’s average citizen spends watching television or Hollywood movies and you understand that we are talking about two cultures only distantly related.

The idea of commonwealth has survived mostly as one of those abstractions that gets an occasional absent-minded genuflection. John Adams made the Puritan notion of commonwealth a part of the Massachusetts constitution in 1780, seeking to create a “social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good.” But in 200 years of economic and political history the very idea of “the common good” has fallen upon many tensions. And the notion that government is the natural guarantor of our common interests is today very much taken for granted and at the same time called cynically into question.

In the last several years, there has been a quiet revival of certain intellectual traditions that may lead us to a new consideration of the idea of commonwealth.

In mainstream political discussion we have grown accustomed to rigidly bi-polar choices: Democrats vs. Republicans, liberals vs. conservatives, those who want government solutions vs. those who extol the power of private enterprise. Much of what we call “politics” involves the spectacle of mutual demonization and the pursuit of advantage between the two camps. Meanwhile, a great many citizens are in the middle, pulled one way in one election, another way in another. They are not entirely comfortable with the political vocabu-
Governor William Weld showed his political antennae to be in good working order when he called attention earlier this year to the way today's economy is making people nervous.

Noting the difference between how Wall Street celebrates "all this corporate aerobicizing" and how workers worry about it, he said in his State of the State address, "It's time we consider what government can do about that." He also suggested it's time for corporate leaders to consider what they can do.

Gov. Weld's ideas on government measures were familiar: cut taxes, invest in education, and lower the cost of doing business in Massachusetts. On what business leaders should do, he was less specific. He urged employers to remember "You still have a responsibility for the good of the community in which you reside." He asked businesses to understand that workers "are not disposable," and to "make sure their paychecks grow when corporate profits do."

The governor's latter point would have faded into rhetorical thin air except for this: He had on hand a real-life example of the kind of responsible corporate citizen he had in mind. He spoke about Aaron Feuerstein, the president of the Malden Mills textile company, who has received national attention for the way he handled his employees after a fire in December destroyed three buildings in a complex of mills on the Lawrence-Methuen line. In addition to paying his workers while the mills are rebuilt, Feuerstein has been adamant about not moving his operations south, or abroad, in search of cheaper labor. Feuerstein got a standing ovation that night at the Statehouse, and a short time later was the guest of the President and the First Lady at President Clinton's State of the Union address.

There is something quite telling about the acclaim Feuerstein has won for acting with a high sense of responsibility toward his employees and his community. Is that kind of decency such a rare thing nowadays? By holding Feuerstein up as a shining example, Weld was implying that we ought to have more of this kind of leadership in the board rooms. Why don't we?

It's a vitally important question, and one that is not often approached with depth or seriousness in our usual political discourse. Ask any business leader why it is harder now for large companies to provide security for their employees and stability for their community and you will hear about relentless international competition, about rapid technological change, about short-term thinking by managers and pressure for ever-higher profits from stockholders.

But perhaps there is a cultural explanation as well—one that Weld hinted at. In the country as a whole, not to mention in the mainstream business world, we have almost forgotten how to talk about the interest of the community, or the common good. In Massachusetts we use the term "commonwealth," but it is treated as a relic from a distant era. In the world of business decision-making, the common good is usually assumed to be served by whatever is most convenient or most efficient for the business—whatever gives it competitive advantage. Over at the Harvard Business School, tomorrow's business leaders are sometimes reminded not to make "normative statements"—to speak of shoulds and shouldn'ts—when discussing management decisions. The successful manager must put the survival of the business first.

Gov. Weld used the term "old-fashioned" to describe Aaron Feuerstein's business ethic. It is surely that. Though Feuerstein's moral frame of reference comes from his Orthodox Jewish faith, it is striking to consider how much his values resemble those that governed Massachusetts in its earliest years. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony of the 1600s it was well understood that economic behavior was to be seen within a communal context—that you could never entirely separate the individual pursuit of profit from the collective well-being.

There's a fascinating treatment of these matters in Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England, by Stephen Innes, published by
Norton last year. Innes reminds us that a central concern of the clergy in early New England was to distinguish between “honest gain” and “present profit.” “The Massachusetts inhabitants were told by five generations of ministers,” Innes writes, “that they could remain in God’s New Israel only by restraining avarice and cupidity, by always behaving as one ‘Community as members of the same body...’”

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lary of the left or the right. Consulting only their own common sense, they know that not everything can be improved by government action and that not everything can be left to the market.

What is beginning to get more attention is that there is something else between the two familiar poles that ought to be a part of the discussion: namely, "civil society," a term that is being used to describe that world of social concern and public action that is separate from Big Government and Big Business. Much of our local politics, especially in Massachusetts, still makes room for the influence of civil society. Churches, nonprofit organizations, volunteer and civic groups, town meetings, neighborhood activists—all have a role in shaping community life. But in many cities and towns, and certainly in the wider communities of state and nation, the role of civil society seems diminished, often made irrelevant by well-funded special interest groups.

In a similar vein, some scholars have called our attention to the importance of "social capital" in building strong communities. As explained in an influential article by Robert Putnam (in The American Prospect, Spring of 1993), social capital refers to "networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." Social capital, Putnam writes, enhances investment in physical and human capital. In other words, a blighted area may or may not benefit from new buildings, better streets and more money spent on education and training. What can make the difference is whether the developers are connected to the community, whether there is trust between residents and planners, whether, for that matter, a functioning community even exists in the area.

A key insight here is that social capital is not just about "good government." As Putnam puts it, "The social capital embodied in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government." Stephen Innes finds that this held true in colonial Massachusetts: He links the rapid rate of economic development with the Puritans' "civic ecology," which combined norms of hard work, discipline, and social solidarity with increasing production and investment. "Success in achieving this combination ... allowed Massachusetts Bay to become the New World's first capitalist commonwealth," Innes writes.

How might current thinking about civil society, social capital, and commonwealth pertain to Massachusetts politics as we have come to know it in the 1990s?

Looking at today's state government, the average citizen sees a familiar political stagnation. On the one hand, we have an entrenched liberal Democratic estab-

lishment that is notable for its habitual snobbishness, occasional arrogance, and reflexive defense of the status quo. In opposition, some state Republican leaders have identified themselves with an easy I've-Got-Mine libertarianism that plays on anti-government and anti-tax sentiment.

But party politics has seldom been the place to look for new ways of thinking about social problems. The sense of excitement, innovation, and hope that is present in Massachusetts seldom makes the news and is not the stuff of paid political advertising on TV. But it can be seen in the attention being paid to Putnam's work on social capital and civic engagement. It can be found in projects such as City Year, which educates urban youth in community service. It can be found in an active network of nonprofit organizations, some of which are beginning to think about a new entrepreneurialism—putting the profit principle to work for social causes. It can be seen in church-based community organizations affiliated with the Organizing and Leadership Training Center in Boston, such as those in Worcester, Lynn, and Brockton (see page 55), which bring ordinary people into conversation—and negotiation—with local power brokers. It can even be seen, often enough, in the oldest tradition of Massachusetts political life: the town meeting. As Putnam notes, "the historical roots of the civic community are astonishingly deep."

Governor Weld was on to something when he urged Massachusetts business leaders to be more mindful of workers and communities—or as we might amend it, to make concern for the commonwealth a more important part of their corporate culture. A politician often scores political points by lecturing the powerful, especially when the powerful have little reason to believe he really means it. It is a trickier proposition to lecture the citizens on their responsibilities—politicians are perhaps not the best ones to do it. But this is part of it, too, and many citizens themselves are beginning to stand up and say so.

A renewed civic activism, a "new citizenship," as some are calling it, is up against tremendous odds. Putting aside the concern about whether the new economy leaves people too worn out to participate in self-government, a new citizen-driven politics carries a certain burden of idealism. It requires a collective vote of confidence in our own abilities to work toward a new commonwealth. The challenge may be less daunting if we see it as a question of balance. If the role of the citizen is diminished, it is useful work to strengthen it. If theorists tell us that more civic activity not only will revitalize democratic government but lead to better economic development, that is an idea worth pursuing.
Developments in Plymouth

PLYMOUTH—Attorney F. Steven Triffletti campaigned for town moderator as something other than a staunch advocate of the town meeting form of government. In fact, he told me recently, “I was a leading proponent of abolishing town meeting” several years ago when the town was re-examining its charter. A local referendum in 1989 failed to end the town meetings. And in May of 1992 Mr. Triffletti was elected moderator on a platform of making the process “more responsive to the people.”

When I first dropped in on Plymouth’s town meeting last June, it was a hazy 90-degree evening and people were fanning themselves with their warrants. With several lengthy debates looming, Mr. Triffletti had decided to limit each speaker to five minutes. Some members objected. The moderator informed the body that, according to Town Meeting Time, the moderators’ Bible, it would require a two-thirds vote to change the procedure. Not all were impressed with Mr. Triffletti’s lawyerly dispatch. “This is town meeting. This is not that book!” said George Parker, a citizen who keeps a close eye on the moderator.

The five-minute rule stood; though, quite noticeably, it did not apply to town officials. This was perhaps more curious to an outsider who was hearing for the first time a sampling of the local oratory, particularly that of Selectmen Chairman Eugene T. Lane, a solemn official who grips the lectern with both hands and speaks without notes, in the deliberate style of a man who has been given all the time he needs. The meeting proceeded slowly. I had hoped to hear the body resolve a question I had taken an interest in, having to do with a gigantic parcel of undeveloped land, but the night was spent discussing the town’s sewerage challenges which, as I came to understand, are considerable.

Much about Plymouth is oversized. In geography, it is by far the largest municipality in Massachusetts, covering almost 98 square miles. (In population it is the state’s fourth largest town, with 47,000 residents.) That parcel of undeveloped land in question, a five-square-mile plot, is larger (by one square mile) than Somerville, a city of 72,000. It is believed to be the largest single piece of privately held land in the state. Since the earliest days of the Commonwealth it has contained only forests, ponds and the smallest of settlements.

Now there is talk of making use of the land: A shopping center has been proposed, and new subdivisions, and office buildings, and a golf course. But the area is zoned “rural residential.” For any commercial development to take place the town meeting must agree by a two-thirds majority on a re-zoning plan.

The development plans came up for a vote in last summer’s session, as they had earlier in the year. Both times the re-zoning failed to win a two-thirds majority. As it turned out, the issue was on the warrant again in November’s special town meeting and I made another visit to Plymouth to see how it would come out.

The 104 members of Ply-
mouth’s representative town meeting are pretty familiar with the parcel of land in question. Several years ago, the town created an “overlay” zoning that would allow certain kinds of high-tech business use of the land. Shortly afterward, the land was acquired by the Digital Equipment Corporation. But as Digital’s fortunes took a nosedive, the company abandoned plans to use the property. In 1994, Digital entered into a purchase-and-sale agreement with Plymouth resident Tom Wallace, who envisioned an outlet-style shopping center and perhaps a PGA-certified golf course, among other potential uses.

Mr. Wallace is no shadowy, behind-the-scenes developer. He understands that with the town meeting playing a role in deciding the Digital land’s fate a political campaign of sorts is required. He mingles easily with town meeting members and knows who is with him and who is on the fence. His speech to the assembly was a mix of public-spiritedness and cajolery. The town needs commercial development, he said, to shore up the tax base. Of course the whole parcel could be filled up with subdivisions, he reminded the representatives, and it wouldn’t require a zoning change. But that would put an unmanageable burden on the town’s services. Mr. Wallace spoke of creating jobs, and recalled his own labor history as a stock boy, a fry cook, and a roofer. “These hands have never seen a manicure. These hands have never seen a silver spoon. There’s dirt under these fingernails, and I’m proud of that dirt, because it’s hard-work dirt,” he said.

Opposition to Mr. Wallace’s plan was led by Bill Abbott, a lawyer who has been a Plymouth town meeting member for about 20 years. Mr. Abbott called attention to the possibility of 900,000 square feet of retail space being created and called Mr. Wallace’s plan a “monster mall.” Richard Serkey charged that “Our leaders operate as Mr. Wallace’s handmaidsens,” drawing an audible grumble in the auditorium. All in all, the five-minute rule kept the debate moving toward its inevitable dramatic conclusion. Everyone in the room knew the outcome would hinge on one or two votes. Late in the evening the roll call was held. With 96 representatives present, development proponents would need 64 votes. Moderator Trifletti announced the result: By 62-34, the re-zoning was defeated.

Within weeks, Mr. Wallace was planning to sell a small part of the land for future development as single-family homes. And he informed local leaders he would be back with another zoning article in the April town meeting.

Mr. Abbott planned to keep up the opposition. “Malls are always pregnant,” he told me after the vote. “They’ll just breed further retail sprawl.” He and other opponents say they are not against development of the land—they hope another technology company might come forward with an office park or research campus plan.

Town Planner John Lenox doesn’t expect that to happen. He said both Digital and Mr. Wallace have sought such development, to no avail. While granting that such a plan might be in the best long-term interests of Plymouth, Mr. Lenox said the town doesn’t have the option of forcing a delay. “The property owner has the right to use the property,” he said.

Until the town meeting bends, the owner is restricted to residential development. Opponents are betting that Mr. Wallace can’t make a residential plan work. “It’s a very high stakes game of poker,” Mr. Lenox conceded.

—DAVE DENISON

Sex in the Suburbs

CHELMSFORD—There may have been some in town who liked the symbolism of it: The only two locations in this quiet suburb at which X-rated entertainment could be legally established were the old town dump and the old town hall. Such an arrangement seemed designed to please both the moralist and the cynic, but what the courts would say about it was another matter.

Town Counsel John Giorgio informed local officials last summer that courts were not likely to sanction Chelmsford’s arrangement. Officials were inclined to listen. Weeks earlier, nude dancing had come to town, and not at the dump or the old town hall. Strippers were dancing for dollars at the Princeton Restaurant and Lounge, which at one point had been a respectable family restaurant.

The Princeton’s experiment in risqué business was short-lived. A hearing was hastily held and the Lounge’s liquor license was revoked. Soon after, the business was closed and the property went into foreclosure.

But Mr. Giorgio warned that if a new establishment wanted to make a go of it in the table-dancing trade, it might feel free to

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choose a more desirable location than regulations seemed to allow. That's because courts have consistently ruled that towns and cities cannot enact zoning laws that make it impossible for sex-orient-

ed businesses to set up shop. What Chelmsford needed, Mr. Giorgio advised, is a new selection of districts set aside for adult entertainment.

Town meeting members filed in to the Chelmsford Senior Center in October to consider the unpalatable proposition that the town's sex-zone bylaws were unduly restrictive. Chelmsford elects 162 town meeting representatives from nine precincts. They sit at round tables in the Senior Center auditorium, banquet style. There is a pale pink theme to the room, coordinated in the chairs, floor tiles, walls and curtains. A bingo board is pushed off to the side of the stage behind the moderator's lectern.

Located on Lowell's southern border, Chelmsford grew rapidly through the 1980s and now has a population of 32,000. Residents are well aware that sex businesses have established themselves in nearby Tewksbury and Billerica.

You see, at meetings such as this, how useful the euphemism "adult entertainment" can be. When a group is using the style of community decision-making put in place by the Puritans, there is something incongruous about discussing the particulars of commerce involving public nudity. Nevertheless, the discussion turned startlingly specific when John Wilder of Precinct 5, who is known as one of the town's more conservative representatives, asked Selectman Peter Lawlor what kind of businesses are permitted under "CX zoning," which allows adult entertainment.

Mr. Lawlor mentioned adult literature and videos and "uh, pretty much the gamut." When pressed, the Selectman began reading from the town bylaw for CX zoning and found himself enumerating sexual devices, including "any artificial penis, vagina and anus..." He speeded up his delivery, but it only got worse. He paused and turned to the moderator. "Do you want me to continue?" he asked. "Maybe you could slow down a little bit," joked Moderator Dennis McHugh, triggering a round of laughter and applause.

Dennis Ready, a former Selectman, read a prepared speech against creating the new districts. "This kind of activity will cost everyone who owns property in the town," he said. Others opposed the specific districts that town planners and the town manager were recommending, as being too close to residential neighborhoods. But Town Counsel Giorgio's arguments held sway. There can be no outright prohibition of pornography and nude dancing, because courts have judged such activities to be constitutionally protected free speech.

The trick, as all who were present knew, is to zone in such a way that makes it as difficult as possible for "undesirable" businesses to set up, without being so restrictive as to invite a lawsuit. A strong majority at October's meeting was satisfied that the town's plan fit the bill and it was approved 125-16.

The next week, the town meeting went a step further and approved a "local acceptance" statute that prohibits nudity in establishments that serve liquor. The state statute, passed by the Legislature in 1981, allows towns to accept liquor licensing provisions that prohibit "any person to appear on said licensed premises in any manner or attire as to expose to public view any portion of the public area, anus, vulva or genitals, or any simulation thereof," and that further prohibits "any female to appear on licensed premises in such manner or attire as to expose to view any portion of the breast below the top of the areola, or any simulation thereof."

Mr. Giorgio granted, in an interview after the town meeting action, that there is "significant question" whether such a statute could be upheld as constitutional. He had noted such concerns in front of the Chelmsford representatives as well.

But has there ever been a town meeting, in 350 years of Massachusetts history, at which such prohibitions would fail to win resounding approval?

—DAVE DENISON
What Does It Take to Launch a New Party?

It's going to freak a lot of people out when they walk into the voting booth and there are three parties to choose from," So says Ron Bargoott, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Libertarian Party, which in this year's general election will be listed on the ballot alongside Democrats and Republicans. In 1994, the party's Secretary of State candidate, Peter Everett, exceeded the 3 percent threshold in the statewide vote (he won 5 percent, Bargoott points out), thus establishing the Libertarians as a "major party."

In addition to fielding aspirants for some local offices (a must if they are to maintain their new status) the Libertarians are also holding a presidential primary in Massachusetts early this year. So far, the leading candidate is Harry Browne (author of the tome "Why Government Doesn't Work").

Winning "major party" status in Massachusetts can be done in one of two ways: by fielding a statewide or presidential candidate who wins at least 3 percent of the vote; or by registering at least one percent of the state's total registered voters (that would mean about 30,000, since Massachusetts has about 3 million voters) under a new party designation.

Typically, groups trying to establish a political party first field a slate of candidates, who are identified on the ballot by a designation of up to three words. Candidates with a political designation who are running for U.S. Senate, Governor, or President are required to collect the signatures of 10,000 registered voters. Candidates for Secretary of State or Treasurer need 5,000 signatures. The good news! You only need 50 signatures to form your own political designation.

Thanks to a statewide referendum, Question 4, which was approved by voters in 1990, it is now easier for "third-party" candidates to get on the ballot in Massachusetts. Opponents of easier ballot access say the reforms eliminate the "electoral hurdles" independent candidates face without forcing them to hold party primaries or nominating conventions.

Before the state legislature began erecting a series of barriers in the late 1930s, however, election laws in Massachusetts—the first state to employ printed ballots—were sympathetic toward third-party challengers.

"The major parties in their long reign, unbroken since 1856 around most of the country, have done a pretty good job making it harder for third parties to function—and one way to do that is by
Have teachers lost their clout?

Beacon Hill clout has been slowly draining away from the once-mighty teachers union lobby. Partly it's a sign of the times. Associated Industries of Massachusetts, a big-business lobby that helped pass 11 tax cuts in the past five years, is now considered the most effective and most powerful lobbying presence in the Statehouse.

But, according to legislators, the unions—especially the dominant Massachusetts Teachers Association—have hurt their own cause.

"They lost a lot of their muscle during the debate over the Education Reform Act of 1993," said one Republican legislator, "because they were seen as being against reform. They just wanted more money with no oversight."

"They're too narrowly focused on their own pecuniary issues and not on their clients, the kids," said a Democratic member of the legislative leadership. "They need someone in their leadership to say to the members: 'Stop whining.'"

Teachers unions across the country are seeing their legislative influence wane in these days of worried parents and an ascendant Republican agenda. "Not long ago," stated the December issue of Governing magazine, "they were the most feared lobby in dozens of state capitals. They don't have as much clout these days."

While the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers is widely considered to be open to change and amenable to compromise, the larger Massachusetts Teachers Association has antagonized legislators with many of their tactics—painting the Legislature as the enemy when it suits their political purpose, demanding too much from lawmakers already feeling the budget squeeze, resisting change, and publicly rating legislators by their votes on union issues that don't involve education.
sional district in which he or she gathers signatures. If candidates don’t meet that criteria, their petitions may be disqualified. Nearly one-half of all ballot access challenges in the nation originate in New York.

In Wisconsin, by contrast, collecting the signatures of 10,000 voters, including at least 1,000 residing in each of at least three of Wisconsin’s nine congressional districts, is all that is required to claim major party “ballot status.” Parties that have attained this position in Wisconsin, and thus may participate in the state’s September “Partisan Primary,” include the Libertarian, U.S. Taxpayers, and New Progressive parties. Winning at least one percent of the vote in a subsequent statewide election allows a party to maintain this status without repeating the petition process.

—JENNIFER BABSON

The teachers union has paid the price. The first “charter” schools allowed by the Education Reform Act—-independent, experimental schools staffed by non-union teachers—opened last year. In the old days, several legislators said, the proposal for charter schools probably wouldn’t have made it to the House floor for debate, let alone into law.

The Education Reform Act also removed public school principals and assistant principals from teachers’ collective bargaining units, which one legislator called “a slam dunk on the MTA.” Still, the MTA, the MFT and smaller unions remain important lobbies in Massachusetts. “They’re still the strongest union at the Statehouse,” said the Republican legislator. “If they’re not the strongest overall lobby on Beacon Hill, they’re certainly among the strongest. A lot of the most innovative ideas in education are just put aside because people are afraid of antagonizing them.”

They are not, however, among the biggest spenders on lobbying. The MTA, with three full-time staff lobbyists, spent about $148,155 on lobbying in 1994, according to records on file with the Secretary of State, while all education organizations spent a total of $885,772 on lobbying.

In the categories used by the Secretary of State for reporting lobbying expenses, that puts education lobbyists well behind the insurance lobby ($2.8 million in 1994), health care and hospital groups ($1.9 million) and business organizations and associations ($1.9 million).

Teachers unions do get bang for their lobbying buck. The education lobby spends about the same amount on Beacon Hill as the lobbies for utilities and tobacco and alcohol—and everyone considers the MTA a more powerful influence than those groups.

Neither the MFT nor the MTA are major financial contributors to campaigns. What the teachers unions are able to provide, however, are members to hold signs and lick envelopes for friendly legislative candidates.

When legislators talk among themselves, they discover that while some get considerable help from unions, some get little or none; and that only fuels the antagonism many legislators already feel.

Those are bad tactics. Yet what may hurt the MTA the most is the widespread perception, stated by one strongly pro-education legislator, that the union “lobbies for teachers, not education.”

The MTA is first and foremost a labor union, with its primary responsibility to its members. About 63,000 of the 75,000 K-12 public school teachers in Massachusetts belong to the MTA. Another 8,000-9,000 belong to the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, an AFL-CIO affiliate.

Still, as a huge union, the MTA has resources that will ensure its power on Beacon Hill for as long as there is a teachers union. They have the tools to mobilize a constituency, whether of teachers or parents or both—the organization skills, the technical skills, and the access to media.

And few legislative districts in the state are without MTA members who vote. “What is powerful is the issue of education,” said one legislator. “When they focus on kids, they are very powerful.”

—MARK LECCESE (Leccese is Statehouse Bureau Chief for Community Newspaper Co.)
A Look at the Legislature’s Most Mysterious Committee

Rep. David B. Cohen concedes that his committee does not frequently command the public spotlight.

“When I was first elected, I don’t think I knew there was a ‘Bills in the Third Reading,’” the Newton Democrat laughs. Perhaps that is due to the fact that the House committee Cohen chairs holds no public hearings; no official meetings among its three members; and operates in quiet efficiency in a basement office in the Statehouse.

The committee is charged with vetting bills — those that have already made their way through the committee system — for their state constitutionality before they are permitted final consideration on the House floor. It functions, in part, as a legal copy editor for state legislators, some of whom may not be well-versed in the particulars of Massachusetts code. Does a bill reference the wrong section of the law? Maybe the definition of the measure “doesn’t make sense,” as one House counsel put it. Or perhaps the bill is littered with the kind of grammatical errors that would make a third-grade teacher blush.

Members need not worry, says Cohen, an attorney, because the committee will clean those things up. (The Senate has its own version of the panel.)

While the committee has reported hundreds of bills to the floor within this House session alone, that leaves hundreds of others, according to some estimates, that have yet to emerge from Third Reading. If a measure not destined — due to content or poor drafting — for the House floor lands in Third Reading, the panel has three ways of dispensing with the bill. “We can hold onto it,” Cohen says, until the end of the session (two years), when it automatically expires; the committee may file a special report asking that it be discharged of further action on the bill (a sign that Third Reading has serious problems with it); or the panel may send it back to committee with a request that changes be made. (The committee itself is permitted to make technical changes to bills.)

Third Reading has earned the reputation as a “graveyard” of sorts for legislation that House leaders have little interest in putting to a final, recorded vote. The House counsel, who reports to Speaker Charles F. Flaherty, plays a central role, along with Cohen, in determining whether a measure will receive the Third Reading stamp of approval. Cohen says the committee does not keep track of how many measures fail to make it out of Third Reading. The committee’s defenders point out that few other states require, as Massachusetts does, that state representatives file bills on behalf of constituents who petition them to do so. This leads, defenders say, to an avalanche of legislation, the bulk of which lawmakers do not have time to consider.

But critics contend the committee has become another tool that leaders use to shape the agenda of the House. “The idea is to have a committee whose role is to make sure the bills are in proper form,” says Paul Fitzgerald, executive director of Common Cause Massachusetts, a nonprofit watchdog group. “The problem occurs when you don’t use that to go through the process but you use it to control the process.” One
could say the committee has a high success rate: Rarely does a measure reported out of Third Reading fail to win final passage in the House.

But "sometimes bills languish in there forever, because representatives don't realize that they need to bring it to the attention of the committee chairman," says Rep. Carol A. Donovan (D-Woburn), who served as vice-chair of the committee last year. If the Speaker desires an immediate floor vote on a bill that has not yet been reported out of Third Reading, at least one member of the panel must be present to report the bill from the committee with the stroke of a pen. "One of us had to be at all of the sessions," says Donovan. "If the Speaker or Majority Leader wanted something, we had to be there." And unlike in the Senate, which recently saw a series of internal rules reforms, bills in the House are not required to be placed on a floor calendar prior to their consideration. They may be brought up at any time.

The movement of some bills straight from Third Reading to a floor vote and passage during informal House sessions (in which measures deemed "non-controversial" may be passed by a voice vote of the members who are present) has irked some lawmakers. But Cohen says criticism, which he claims is infrequent, comes with his job: "If I bring up a bill too quickly, I'm subject to the complaint that it has been greased," Cohen says. "If I take too much time, I'm sitting on it." —JENNIFER BABSON

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INNOVATIONS

An award-winning example of government assistance

You can find the Heritage apartments in Newton using the simplest of maps. Follow the Massachusetts Turnpike to Centre Street and you're at Newton Corners. Just beyond where the public library used to be, you can see the "Heritage at Vernon Court," a nicely renovated 115-unit housing development for elderly residents. It would be more difficult to locate this new development on the ideological map. It falls somewhere between the avenue of free-market magic and the boulevard of government solutions.

Old-timers might recognize the Heritage as the former Evans Apartments, an elegant residential hotel built in 1905. In recent years it had become a less elegant apartment complex—"bordering on seedy," as one developer put it—known as Vernon Court. How it came to be that Heritage at Vernon Court now provides desirable housing to 120 citizens, most of them in their 80s or beyond, is a story of flexibility and innovation by both business and government. And it is not just housing that is available here, but "assisted living," an alternative to nursing homes that is growing more popular as the number of people well beyond retirement age continues to grow. Assisted living allows elderly residents to live in a home-like setting, getting help with daily chores and challenges.

The idea for the Heritage apartments was born in the offices of two local companies that specialize in housing alternatives for the elderly. But the financing to make it happen came from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, a low-profile but active arm of government that has proven to be something more than your stereotypical den of sleepy state bureaucrats. Heritage at Vernon Court was the first assisted living development the MHFA helped to launch, as part of what has grown into the agency's Elder CHOICE program.

Last fall, Elder CHOICE won national recognition in the annual Innovations in State and Local Government awards program, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. The program was one of 15 selected for excellence and creativity out of about 1400 entries from around the United States. The award netted the MHFA a $100,000 prize; the money will be used to get information about financing to other potential developers of assisted living projects.

Both private and public participants in the Heritage apartments admit that pure business incentives probably wouldn't have created assisted living at Vernon

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Court. Banks until recently were not making loans to this kind of new housing project. When a development team made up of A.D.S Senior Housing and National Development of New England were looking into the idea in 1991, credit was especially tight.

But A.D.S had created assisted living projects in other states and company leaders thought it could work in Massachusetts. Since the city of Newton had a zoning requirement that a portion of new housing units in the Vernon Court area be reserved for low-income residents, A.D.S approached the MHFA, which has a track record in creating affordable housing.

Ideas about how to finance more housing for the elderly had been kicking around the agency for years. "We saw a tremendous opportunity to test out a model," says Mike Jacobs, a senior development official at the MHFA who took part in the early discussions. The agency put together a low-cost financing package using tax-exempt bonds in 1992 and the developers agreed to set aside 20 percent of the units for Medicaid-eligible low-income tenants. MHFA also set up a working group to study assisted living and to bring together key people from other state agencies. Assisted living promised to be only about two-thirds as expensive as caring for elders in nursing homes. Health and human services officials realized that if the state could encourage the less costly alternative, it might have a chance to reduce the ballooning costs in Medicaid reimbursements for nursing home patients.

But without incentives in place to encourage placement of low-income elders into assisted living developments, the state cannot achieve the Medicaid savings. Many of the commercial assisted living developments that have sprouted up in the last few years are for upper-income tenants. The rent at some new facilities approaches $5,000 a month.

That's where the public-private cooperation exemplified by the MHFA comes in. Operating as a quasi-public agency, it is a cross between a bank and a do-good arm of government. Its mission is to create more affordable housing opportunities for renters and home buyers of moderate or meager means. Where bankers fear to tread, the MHFA is apt to explore the territory.

Since writing its first loan in 1970, the MHFA has made about $2.3 billion in loans for the construction of rental units, and about $1.8 billion in home ownership loans. Agency officials are proud to note it's not taxpayer money that is doing all the work here; the MHFA raises its lending capital by issuing tax-exempt bonds.

In recent years, the MHFA has been the agency federal housing officials have turned to in search of solutions to public housing problems. A number of properties that have been owned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are being transferred to the MHFA. But with state and federal public housing programs under close examination on Beacon Hill and in Washington, some of the coming changes promise to dramatically alter the landscape in which the MHFA has experimented with innovative programs.

Steven Pierce, a prominent Republican who was appointed by Gov. William Weld in January of 1995 as executive director of MHFA, says the agency will benefit from its experience in looking for solutions that are successful in the housing market. "We have a mentality that says we have to compete," Pierce says.

As to whether changes in Washington will hobble the MHFA, Pierce says frankly, "We don't know the answer to that." He does expect "fewer resources in some areas." But, he adds, "I don't equate fewer dollars with less performance, necessarily."

—DAVE DENISON
FAMILY INCOME

Among the 11 largest states, Massachusetts ranks second highest in median family income. The median is the exact mid-point of the income range. A Massachusetts family that made $49,923 in 1994 was at the median: half the families in the state made more and half made less.

When median family incomes are adjusted for inflation, the real gains (and losses) of families can be seen over time. New England families enjoyed a 25 percent real gain in income during the 1980s, while U.S. families saw only a 4 percent increase. Since 1989, real family income has dropped 9 percent in New England and 5 percent nationwide. In Massachusetts, families in the 80th percentile of income saw real gains (expressed here in constant 1994 dollars) from $68,855 in 1979 to $89,625 in 1989. By 1994 this group had a median income of $84,169. Families in the 20th percentile went from $20,557 in 1979 to $25,274 in 1989 and back to $22,411 by 1994.

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Massachusetts Family Incomes, 1979 to 1994

Income Disparity Ratios in 1994

Massachusetts ranks second lowest in the size of the gap between families in the highest fifth of the income distribution and those in the lowest fifth. Among the 11 largest states, income inequality is most extreme in New York, California and Texas.

Source: Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University.
Clipping the Eagle's Wings

By B.J. Roche

Soon after William Dean Singleton, the new owner of The Berkshire Eagle, announced in an interview with the paper last August that he would “give the readers what they want,” he heard what one reader wanted.

“While I warmly welcome Dean Singleton,” wrote Lee Harrison of Williamstown, “I would be more confident in the future if, instead of offering to ‘give readers what they want,’ and to bring us color photography, he had promised to increase the size of the newsroom staff and to cover more fully issues that are vital to our county, our towns and our neighborhoods. ‘Giving readers what they want’ too often is code for trivialization and tabloidization of the news, and color photography in newspapers is usually awful, a bad attempt at imitating magazines.”

In some places, you throw a little color on the front page and readers thank you for it. Berkshire County may not be one of them. For readers and staffers of The Berkshire Eagle, Singleton’s purchase last fall of the 32,000-circulation daily was bittersweet salvation: The newspaper mogul saved the paper from certain bankruptcy, but promptly reduced its newsroom staff and proffered a contract to the paper’s 26-member union that reduces benefits and allows management to fire any employee who speaks negatively about the firm.

Many now wonder what those changes, along with Singleton’s pro-business editorial bent, will mean for the local coverage that made the paper an institution. And, perhaps ironically, some fear that he may not even hold onto the paper for long.

For 103 years, The Berkshire Eagle stood as a beacon of community journalism, dutifully reporting the ephemera of democracy in even the smallest and farthest flung of Berkshire towns: the selectmen’s meetings, planning board decisions, land transfers and school bake sales, along with the Berkshires’ more glittery and literary aspects: the opening nights at Tanglewood, the bashes with the stars at the Williamstown Theater Festival.

Under the ownership of three generations of the Miller family, the Eagle was regarded as one of the best small papers in the country, with an emphasis on quality writing. The Eagle was an ambitious paper, and if the front page often seemed to have more national and international stories than one would expect from a small paper, its lively letters to the editor page and abundance of locally-generated op-ed pieces left no doubt that the Eagle’s heart was in the Berkshires. Reporters and editors at the paper in many cases also enjoyed top-scale salaries. The paper won dozens of awards for its efforts, including a Pulitzer for editorial writing in 1973. And it served as a training ground for many young reporters: Teresa Hanafin, who now runs the city desk at The Boston Globe worked a stint in Pittsfield, as did Globe reporter Anthony Flint, Wall...
Street Journal reporter Dan Pearl and Time magazine editor Priscilla Paino.

Things began to change at the Eagle when publisher and company president Michael G. Miller bought an 11-acre mill complex in Pittsfield for $3.66 million in 1987, and spent $23.7 million to turn the paper's new headquarters, called the Clock Tower, into an award-winning commercial building.

If it had worked, the development would have diversified the company's fortunes. But the purchase couldn't have happened at a worse time: The New England real estate boom was busting, and the region was beginning to feel the first spasms of recession. The Millers were left with an empty commercial complex and plenty of debt—at one point, according to one estimate, amounting to $1,700 per day.

The Clock Tower debacle forced some newsroom layoffs in 1990, and again in 1993. Eagle Publishing took on more debt in 1991, when it bought The Middletown Press in Connecticut. By last summer, the company's debt load, estimated at $19 million, along with skyrocketing newsprint costs, forced the search for a buyer.

Problem was, even though the Eagle itself was a profit-maker, no one seemed to want the company.

Enter Singleton, the Denver-based publisher who has built his empire by buying papers on the ropes, closing them or selling them off when they don't make money, and slashing costs in those he keeps.

Depending on who's talking, Singleton, 44, is either the Dr. Kevorkian of the newspaper business or a savvy operator who tells it like it is. Singleton's MediaNews Group is the parent company of the Denver Post and 78 other daily and weekly papers across the country. But Singleton is best known (and reviled) in the industry for the papers he's closed, which include the Fort Worth Press, the Dallas Times Herald and, in a supporting role last year, the Houston Post.

Singleton sold the Houston Post to Hearst Newspapers, which owns the rival Houston Chronicle, for $120 million, and Hearst abruptly closed the paper shortly thereafter. He told an Eagle reporter that the rising cost of newsprint played a role in the paper's demise: "At $400 a ton the Houston Post was a profitable newspaper, and even though it was a distant number two, it was a very good newspaper...at $800 a ton, it would have lost an enormous amount of money."

And he is unrepentant: "You can't be an artistic success unless you're a financial success," he told the Eagle. "So I don't have any apologies to make for what I've done in the last 20 years."

Stories about the Texas native nearly always describe him as a baby-faced college dropout, and most mention his early days in the 1970s, when he got his start as publisher of the newly revived Fort Worth Press. It was not an auspicious beginning for the 24-year-old Singleton: Three months after his arrival, he shut the paper down and filed the state, allegedly leaving behind $122,000 in debts to the Internal Revenue Service and the first of many lawsuits against him. (He returned in 1986 as the new owner of the Dallas Times Herald.)

A few years after Fort Worth, he landed in Massachusetts as publisher of the Westfield Evening News for Joseph Allbritton Communications, then owner of the Washington Star.

In 1983, Singleton teamed up with New Jersey newspaper publisher Richard B. Scudder, to buy The Gloucester County Times, a 26,000-circulation daily in New Jersey. The two later formed MediaNews Group Inc., and in 1986 alone, the company bought 35 papers, including the Dallas Times Herald.

Singleton's reputation has mellowed, but he remains the publisher journalists love to hate: He was excoriated in an issue of the Columbia Journalism Review for his sale of the Houston Post. Other stories focus on complaints about his company's tendency to meddle in the editorial side on behalf of local business interests, and to spend more on acquiring newspapers than staffing and maintaining the ones it owns. And he's not won any fans in the newsroom for his retention of King and Ballow, the Nashville law firm known for its union fighting skills, to negotiate his employee contracts.

But like him or not, Singleton kept the financially-troubled Oakland Tribune alive, and his revived Denver Post is currently engaged in an old-fashioned newspaper war with The Rocky Mountain News. Even critics grudgingly acknowledge that without Singleton, the Eagle would likely have been permanently grounded.

In August, Singleton and his New England Newspapers Inc., bought the assets owned by Eagle Publishing Company, including the Eagle and four sister papers in Connecticut and Vermont.

Published reports pegged the value of the properties to be worth $40 million to $50 million, but Singleton ended up paying $39.8 million, including $21.7 million for the Eagle, $4.5 million for the Brattleboro Reformer, $6 million for the Bennington Banner and $5.5 million for The Middletown (CT.) Press.

The deal was signature Singleton, structured largely around his assumption of debt: $20.5 million in bank debt for the purchase and restoration of the Clock Tower building, $7 million in pension liability, $3.7 million in debt from The Middletown Press sale, $4.5 million to the Millers for a non-compete agreement, $1 million in cash to pay bills, and another $3 million to the Millers.

Within 90 minutes of the announcement of the sale, Singleton formally sold The Middletown Press to a rival media company, the Trenton, N.J.-based Journal Register Co., reportedly for $10 million.

The Middletown deal caused talk in the industry
because the Millers reportedly did not want any of their papers to go to Journal Register. In an interview with Editor & Publisher, Michael Miller confirmed that the family had no idea Singleton would sell the Press, but declined to comment further, citing a "do-not-disparage" clause in the sale agreement. A similar clause has reportedly been included in a contract now under negotiation for the Eagle's editorial employees. (Repeated attempts to reach Singleton for comment were unsuccessful.)

Unfortunately for Dean Singleton, he has no such agreement with the hundreds of newsroom staffers who have lost their jobs or had salaries cut after his buyouts. The mere mention of his name in some circles evokes a response akin to a skunk at a garden party. Is there another publisher who has had a World Wide Web site dedicated to news, gossip and lawsuits against him? (http://rampages.onramp.net/~basses/toast2.htm/)

Part of it is because Singleton embodies the philosophy of the corporate bean-counters who are now making the calls in newsrooms all over the country. But it's also that, until recently, journalists, particularly those at family-run newspapers, have been largely exempt from the cost-cutting, restructuring and contracting out of work that has occurred in most other American industries.

Indeed, former and current Eagle staffers seem stunned that the kinds of employment practices they have been covering for years in the mills and factories of the Berkshires have actually happened to them.

But most say the Millers created the mess, and Singleton has bought the chance to clean it up.

"He kept it going," says Jack Authelet, a newspaper consultant who publishes a newsletter for the New England Press Association. "Anyone who thinks it would have kept going under the Millers' ownership is crazy... Nobody was going to touch it, so he bought it for pennies on the dollar."

Newspaper analyst John Morton says the sale came as no surprise to him.

"He saw the Eagle as what it was, which, by newspaper standards was overstaffed and had not been efficiently run," Morton says. "He's not sentimental about the newspaper business."

Morton calls Singleton's image as a bad guy "overblown," left over from his early days.

"To the extent that he's controversial, it's because he says what he thinks, and a lot of newspaper people don't," Morton says. "They cough it in noble this and noble that. He'll say, 'it's overstaffed and I had to cut the fat.'"

"He's gotten a lot older," Morton says, "and he really does like newspapers. It wasn't always absolutely clear that he saw them as more than a business."

But staffers at the Eagle aren't convinced of the sincerity of Singleton's early claims of dedication to local coverage. The day after it was announced that Singleton was purchasing the paper, according to published reports, all Eagle employees were instructed to begin interviewing for jobs with the new company. Details on new salaries and benefits, they were told, would be provided to them once the sale was completed at the end of August. Shortly after Singleton took over, 14 of the paper's 42 reporters and editors either left or were not rehired. Those who did stay were subject to pay cuts ranging from 20 to 36 percent. And while the paper had hired at least a dozen new editorial staffers by the end of 1995, some of the new hires were less than full-time employees. The changes have cost the Eagle some of its best talent, including Holly Taylor, an award-winning medical writer, who recently departed for the Albany Times-Union. And the Eagle's respected managing editor, Don MacGillis has gone to work at The Boston Globe.

Beats have been consolidated and coverage for many of the farther-flung towns has been turned over to correspondents, who are paid by the story and receive no company benefits. (Some in the newsroom say this policy actually results in little cost savings when editors' rewriting time is factored in.)

Local coverage is labor-intensive and expensive, especially in a region as large as the Berkshires, which includes 32 towns, the majority of which have populations of fewer than 5,000, and which stretches 40 miles from the Vermont border to Connecticut. But by putting its resources into local coverage, the Eagle served as a unifying institution in Berkshire County.

"The wonderful thing about the Eagle was that it made Berkshire County a community," said photographer Leslie Noyes, who resigned after the buyout with nine years at the paper. "The Eagle covered it all, and made everybody neighbors. You could sit in Adams and read about what a Stockbridge selectman did at a meeting the other night. Berkshire County is going to have less of an identity because of what the Eagle is becoming."

"I don't know what they're going to do when it's time to cover town meetings and local elections for 32 towns," said Gae Elfenbein, who covered the hill towns of northern Berkshire County until she lost her job in September. Elfenbein was also co-president of the newspaper's union, the Eagle News Association.

Community leaders also express caution about the new Berkshire Eagle. John Barrett III, the acerbic seven-term mayor of North Adams, admits he had a love-hate relationship with the Eagle under the Millers, which, he says had an editorial bias against the more working-class northern Berkshires. The Eagle editorialized against major economic development projects that would have benefited the northern Berkshires, including the commercial development of the 1,100-acre
THE DISAPPEARING FAMILY-OWNED NEWSPAPER

The Eagle is the latest in a string of independent family-owned newspapers in Massachusetts that has gone over to corporate ownership in recent years, each for different reasons. The Salem Evening News was bought out by Ottaway Newspapers, Inc., a subsidiary of Dow Jones, after the two branches of a family trust couldn't agree on a course for the paper.

The largest corporate owners in Massachusetts today aren't even a newspaper company: Fidelity Investments, through its Community Newspaper Company, now owns more than 100 papers, mostly weeklies, in suburbs surrounding Boston.

Indeed, the family-owned newspaper seems to be headed the way of the black-and-white television. Fewer than 400 family-owned papers remain in the country by one estimate, but newspaper consultant Jack Authelet says each sale occurred for a different reason. Authelet noted the sell-off of the Ingersoll chain, which he says was forced by bad investments.

"Ingersoll got involved in junk bonds and lost everything," he says. "If the Millers hadn't lost their sens and gone into real estate, they'd still be publishing papers and doing a good job."

One factor that seems to be consistent is the tendency of third-generation ownership to undo what the first and second generations had created.

"You take any business and look at the third generation, and they've screwed it up," says one journalist who is familiar with the Eagle situation. "There are too many cousins and brothers and aunts and uncles."

Just as corporate ownership can take away a local identity, it can also bring resources that rejuvenate a newspaper, Authelet says, citing The Middlesex News, now owned by Fidelity, as an example.

"What happens to papers is as diverse as the reasons why people want to sell," he says. "In some cases, you had some tired old publishers, and it's been refreshing to see a group come along and breathe some new ideas into a publication."

"The new thing is that in a lot of these instances, where the bottom line becomes the overriding concern, you have people other than journalists making the decisions," he adds. "You have bankers making decisions, corporate officers making decisions, and this doesn't always equate to the best decision for Main Street U.S.A."

—B.J. Roche


"They looked down at us," he said.

But Barrett now misses the Millers.

"I laughed a little bit, because when they [the new owner] endorsed me, they said they wanted a kinder and gentler mayor. That's nice of them to say that about me, but I don't know them. If they're committed to local coverage, they should get to know the players."

George S. Wislocki, president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, who was hired by the founding Millers to work there in 1967, says he fears the Millers' editorial page emphasis on protecting the region's environment will soon take a back seat to boosterism and the influence of business interests. One source pointed out that the paper recently cut back on environmentalist Donella Meadows' column. And Wislocki says he's already noticed a decline in local news coverage.

"He [Singleton] has promised that local coverage would be important, but the fact is, unless you have a larger staff you can't deliver on that," Wislocki said. "There's no doubt in my mind that there's far less local coverage."

But others say that the paper, under editor David Scribner, has begun to mend the broken fences left behind by Mark and Michael Miller, who, unlike their father, Lawrence K. "Pete" Miller, had a reputation for being disconnected from the community.

And, they point out, the changes so far have been minimal. "Someone wrote and said the headlines are fairer now," says one staffer. "But it's the same editors writing the headlines."

Perhaps a more realistic fear is one expressed by North Adams' Barrett: that the Clock Tower debt load will eventually force Singleton to sell the paper again. Though the Eagle itself had a healthy balance sheet before the Clock Tower purchase, it's unclear whether, in an economically depressed city, Singleton will be able to find enough tenants to keep the real estate afloat.

"He's never done this before, taking on encumbered space," says one staffer. "He'll unload the paper in a heartbeat if it looks like crunch time."

If that happens, irony of irony, ownership of the paper by bad boy William Dean Singleton may start to look better and better.

B.J. Roche is a correspondent for The Boston Globe in western Massachusetts.

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ILLERICA—If you drive slowly up Heritage Road, looking from one side of the street to the other, from one house to another, what you see at first glance is the look of satisfaction. You see a garden hose neatly wrapped up on its caddie. You see front lawns that are not just a flat plot of grass but that have benefited from a few years of careful attention to the plantings. The setbacks are generous enough that the mail carrier is relieved of the duty to approach each front door. Every house has a mailbox at the end of a driveway. Some mailboxes are improvised—one with cinder blocks and wrought-iron—others are off the shelf of a Home Depot, and some are more elaborate and individual, with the family name posted prominently in silver metal lettering.

Heritage Road takes you into a subdivision known as Heritage Heights. There are several others like it in Billerica, and there are thousands more that are similar across Massachusetts, and thousands again across America. Heritage Heights is designed to be a comfortable enclave, and it is. The first houses went up in the early 1970s, on about 65 acres that generations ago had been farmland but had since become grown over with woods. There are about 100 homes now in the subdivision, none of them grand, but some with backyard pools and decks, some flanked by trees of respectable height.

There is a mix of professional and blue-collar workers here: The town census shows a good many engineers, managers, receptionists, clerks, computer technicians and systems analysts in the neighborhood. There are also maintenance men, security guards, and mechanics. There is at least one truck driver and one banker. The names of families on Heritage Road reflect an ethnic mix, as well: Passerini, DeAngelis, and Daddario; Wetzonis, Dembkoski, Rubesi, O’Neill, Shea, O’Keefe....

Politically, Heritage Road is in the Massachusetts mainstream. Among registered voters in 1992, there were twice as many Democrats as Republicans, 26 to 12, but there were 36 who were independents. About a fourth of the eligible voters were not registered.

In short, if you happen to find yourself at the corner of Heritage...
Road and, say, Homestead Lane, and if you forget for the moment that you are only 20 miles from the Eastern Seaboard, you can imagine yourself standing in the middle of America. In economic terms, it seems plausible. Half the households in the country, you would surmise, are doing better than families here and half are doing worse. From outside appearances this looks to be a representative tract of Middle America, or at least Middle Massachusetts. “The American Dream” is probably not the cultural heritage that the developers had in mind when they named the place Heritage Heights—or maybe it is—but the American Dream is why places like this were created and why the houses and the driveways and the personalized mailboxes don’t stand empty.

William and Kathleen Jenkins at home on Heritage Road with their son, William, Jr., 4.

FAMILY FORTUNES

The families that I spoke with in the Heritage Heights neighborhood during several visits this winter did not strike me as a discontented lot. And why should they be? Their homes are comfortable, their families intact, and there was at least one full-time wage earner in every household. People here know that life can get much worse than this, with a little bit of recklessness, laziness, or a stroke of misfortune. There is an embarrassment, almost, about sounding ungrateful. Nobody wants to be a complainer.
But when the conversation turns to economics, it is not hard to find a reservoir of anxiety or, at the very least, disappointment. Just about any family that has young children and both parents in the work force will provide testimony about the frustration that is a part of modern living—the worries about the children, the exhaustion... These days, there is something else. There is a willingness to ask questions about something that has long been understood to be part of the promise of a hardworking middle-class life: upward mobility. Getting ahead. Is it even possible anymore? Is it more a matter of luck than effort? Has something changed in the American economy that means preventing a slide backward is the best we can hope for?

Lisa Mader is one who thinks about such questions. With her husband Donald, she moved to Heritage Road about three years ago. The Maders have two daughters, Kristen, age 2, and Megan, 1. Donald, 39, is an engineer with a company that develops robotics in Wilmington. Lisa, 35, works about 24 hours a week as a registered nurse. “I consider myself lucky, because a lot of mothers work full time,” she says.

The two incomes don’t seem to stretch quite as far as Lisa would like. “We always think we’re getting ahead, and every time you pay the bills it’s like you’re falling behind,” she sighs. With consolidation in the health care field, Mader has seen nursing salaries drop. “I haven’t had a raise in, I think, over four years now,” she says, “and with everything else going up...”

Lisa is quick to concede that she has it easier than some of her friends—she is thinking especially of one who is a single woman who owns her own home. But when she assesses her economic standing she puts it this way: “I would say the quality of, not the quality of life but, what do I want to say? The level at which we live has gone down. I used to think I was higher middle class and now I think it is lower middle, or middle middle.”

Five homes up the street in the Timmins household, those sentiments would sound familiar. Debra and Joseph Timmins are also raising two children, Ben, 5, and Kelsey, 3. Debra sees her family as “struggling to stay in the middle class.” They bought their house in 1991 for around $150,000, which was better than the $190,000 price it had at the height of the Massachusetts real estate boom, but perhaps still not a bargain. “We were able to buy here based on one salary,” she recalls. “I immediately had to go back to work, because the house started crumbling.”

Debra, who has a degree from UMass-Boston in management of information systems, worked as a systems analyst until last August. Now that she is out of the full-time work force, her husband is “basically working two jobs” if you tally up the overtime. Joseph puts his computer science degree from Bentley College to work at GTE in Needham.

Debra admits that when she was a salaried worker, she felt the frustration of trying to win in the rat race. They put $10,000 into improving the house, but whether it would improve the market value was uncertain. She looked at her parents, who had done pretty well for themselves, and it seemed that the economics of middle-class advancement were harder now. “I was getting into that cycle where I was very resentful,” she says. But she also looked around and saw some who were doing well financially and realized it didn’t necessarily make them happier. She’s come to the point now, she says, where she is more interested in fulfillment than riches; she is hoping to enter the Christian ministry this year.

Joe Timmins can’t help realizing that a minister will not make as much as a systems analyst. Having grown up poor in Watertown, Joe looks at his improved standard of living with pride. “At a very early age, I said to myself I didn’t want to live in the projects when I was in my 20s and 30s,” he says. Now, with a decent job and a decent house, he is willing to consider Debra’s pursuit of her calling and her chance to spend more time with the children as part of an improved quality of life. “We’ve made a decision that it’s better for her to be at home with the kids, especially with the high cost of daycare,” Joe says.

Debra admits it will be an adjustment not being able to buy all the usual goods associated with suburban life. During the heavy snows this winter, neighbors with snow blowers came by to help as the Timminses labored to shovel their walks the old-fashioned way. “And I would really love to have a camcorder,” Debra says. “It’s a constant struggle to remind ourselves what’s important,” she says.

William and Kathleen Jenkins live at the other end of Heritage Road, with their son William, Jr., who is 4. They bought their house in 1987, when “the market was going through the roof,” Kathleen says. “Everything was $200,000, $210,000 on this street.” They purchased theirs for $118,000. “It was one step from being condemned,” William said. “It was a shack.”

For a few years, “We were the definition of ‘house poor,’” Kathleen recalls. “Every paycheck it would be, ‘What should we buy with this? A door? A window?’” Both were working full time. On weekends, William did the renovation work. Today the house is comfortable and attractive, on a par with the others on the street.

Kathleen now works part time in a doctor’s office, while William works in the information services department for a mid-sized Boston cleaning company. “We find ourselves just working to survive, to pay the bills,” Kathleen says. The couple wouldn’t mind moving to a new house, and they’ve looked off-and-on
over the last year. But for now they've concluded "It would be more money, and a move down."

The Jenkinses are impressive for their optimism, perhaps partly because they have already done better than the families they have met through living with neither one of them having more than a high school degree. "I can't believe how lucky we are, to have gotten as far as we have without a college degree," William concedes. They also take joy—it is easily apparent—in their ebullient young son and in each other.

Still, they are well aware of the realities of modern middle-class economics. Insurance, automobile expenses, taxes... "All these other things go up and what stays down is your wages," Kathleen says. "You do feel squeezed."

Asked where they place themselves economically, Kathleen says in the middle of the middle class. William says "lower middle." To him, middle class would mean earning in the $100,000 range, to have the house almost paid off, and to be able to afford new cars.

But Kathleen feels lucky to need only part-time employment. Perhaps if they bought a more expensive house she'd have to increase her hours on the job. She uses the word "luxury" in a different context than a wealthy person might. "That's really a luxury to be able to stay home with your children," she says.

**The High Cost of Education**

There are, in fact, several families on Heritage Road that have made it as one-income families in which the mother has been able to stay home. They are almost without exception the families that bought their houses in the '70s, before prices balloononed. They might be seen as the last of the generation that had a fairly easy time getting a house in the suburbs at a young age. Now those who have stayed put don't feel the same pinch the younger families do. It makes a big difference if you are 20 years into a $30,000 mortgage or three years into a $150,000 mortgag. But there is a common concern that has to do with another part of the American Dream: providing a good education for your children. Some families have adjusted to a less ambitious college plan than they might have hoped for.

The Davenport's are one such family. They were one of the first families to move to Heritage Road, buying their house in 1974 for about $39,000. Keith Davenport has supported his wife Mary and their two sons on his salary as a probation officer in Cambridge. Mary has had time to run the household and to become one of the town's better known community activists.

But Keith looks at his own education, four years at Suffolk University in Boston, and believes he could not provide to his sons what his father, a Cambridge police officer making $8,500 a year, provided for him. Keith remembers his college expenses as $800 a year for the first two years, $900 for the third, and $1000 for the final year. Today it would cost more than $17,000 a year for his son to attend Suffolk, he figures. Running a quick calculation in his head, he concludes that for the scale to be equivalent to what it was for him and his dad, "My pay would have to be in excess of $140,000 a year." "That's just one example of the way things have gone crazy," Keith says. His sons, Scott, 22, and Ryan, 18, are working and attending state schools.

Around the block, on Eastview Avenue, Joanne and Tony Giovino have some of the same concerns. Like the Davenport's, they bought their house in 1974, for about $40,000. Tony owns a service station in Medford and Joanne held a job when they first bought the house. In recent years she has stayed home, raising their two daughters, Katelyn, 14, and Leslie Ann, 11. Like Mary Davenport, she has been an active community member, serving on local boards and commissions. She and her husband both have college degrees, and they'd like their daughters to have the same advantage. She has friends whose children are now in college. "When I hear what they're paying for a semes-
ter, I think, 'Oh my god,'” Joanne says. Saving enough for their daughters’ college costs is “our primary concern,” she says. “I do worry about it.”

When Joanne Giovino looks at the younger families in her neighborhood, she feels little envy for their challenges. “I don’t know how the young couples are doing it now. I really don’t,” she says. “If we had to start out now, it’d be a tough struggle.” Having two young daughters, she sometimes finds herself wondering what economic life will be like for the next generation. It seems that a lot of children in their 20s are moving back in with their parents, she observes. Asked if she can imagine her daughters achieving a higher standard of living than she and her husband have achieved, she says, “No, I can’t. And that’s sad. It makes me very sad.”

“It’s too bad,” Joanne Giovino says, “because that’s just something you take for granted as the American way.”

**WHAT HAS CHANGED**

It is, of course, a commonplace now that future generations will not see the rapid rise in living standards that the early post-World War II generation saw. But has anything really changed for America’s middle class? Hasn’t it always been difficult to improve one’s standard of living? Didn’t those who grew up in the Depression and prospered in the ‘40s and ‘50s make it because they worked steadily and saved religiously? Or is the anecdotal evidence of harder times for today’s families borne out by economists?

“In the last 15 years, there’s been no growth in real wages for the average worker in the country,” says Andrew Sum of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University. Sum and his colleagues Paul Harrington, Neal Fogg, and Neeta Fogg, prepared a comprehensive look at the New England economy that was released earlier this year. (The study was commissioned by the Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, the publisher of *CommonWealth*.)

Entitled “The State of the American Dream in New England,” the study confirms what has changed for today’s families. The CLMS economists looked at the change in family living standards primarily by examining the real (inflation-adjusted) median incomes for families over time. (The median family income is the level at which half of the families are above and half are below.) In New England, the study points out, the median family income went up 55 percent from 1949 to 1959. In the 1960s, families saw an increase of 39 percent. During the 1970s the advances slowed: real family incomes rose only 4 percent in that decade. Recent years have brought actual decreases: from 1989 to 1994 New England experienced a 9 percent decline in median family income.

What has made the sudden slide even more dramatic in New England is that it came after the kind of strong economic performance in the 1980s that the rest of the country didn’t experience. New England families saw a 25 percent boost in real incomes during the ‘80s (families in the census tract including Heritage Hills in Billerica experienced a 28 percent gain), while the United States as a whole saw only a 4 percent gain. The regional boom in the ‘80s made the sudden recession from 1989 through 1991 all the more a rude awakening.

As the “State of the American Dream” report makes clear, Massachusetts and New England families have yet to regain the ground lost in that recession. The median real family income in Massachusetts had risen to $53,330 by 1989. By 1994, median income in Massachusetts was $49,949, a decline of 6.3 percent. (Income figures are expressed in 1994 dollars.)

So when Heritage Road families talk about going through the first half of the 1990s without a raise, they are part of an aggregate of workers who have had the same experience. If it feels as if they are running faster on the economic treadmill just to stay in place, they are not imagining it: The $20 an hour that Lisa Mader was making in 1991 and is still making today is worth about $18 an hour, adjusted for inflation. Faced with a cut in real wages, Lisa sees clearly what is necessary in order to keep up: “The only way is to work more hours.”

That is exactly what most families have done over the last 15 years, according the Center for Labor Market Studies. In 1994, 75 percent of married couple families in New England had both the husband and the wife employed at some point during the year, up from about 65 percent in 1979. The median number of hours worked by all wives grew substantially—up from about 810 hours a year in 1979 to about 1,560 in 1994. That amounts to an extra 21 weeks of full-time employment.

In married couple families with no children under 18 years of age, wives now work about the same number of hours per year as husbands. In families with one or more children, most wives log fewer hours of paid employment than their husband, but the share of family employment hours for mothers has been going up in New England: from 21 percent in 1979 to 33 percent in 1989 to 37 percent in 1994. When you look at the real median incomes of husbands separately from wives, you see that husbands saw median incomes grow somewhat in the 1980s, as did their wives. But from 1989 to 1994, husbands’ median incomes fell while wives’ increased. The overall improvement in family income that occurred during the 1979 to 1994 period is attributable mostly to increased earnings by wives. (Families are also having fewer children, which tends to cause per capita income statistics to rise more rapidly.)
Working more hours has been, in some ways, a successful strategy for married couples over the last 15 years. But as Sum and his co-authors point out, such a strategy may have reached its limit. There are not many more additional hours for working parents to contribute, short of having both parents working full time, or overtime, and footing astronomical child care expenses. Future growth of family incomes will be dependent on higher wages and salaries, the study concludes. "Higher real wages, in turn, will be dependent upon a sustained rise in labor productivity and the ability of workers to more fully share in the fruits of increased productivity," according to the authors.

The families in Heritage Heights are, for the most part, the ones who have succeeded in assembling most ingredients of success in the new economy. Having two parents in the household has been one of the most consistent guarantees of income gains. Married couple families in New England, for example, saw an increase in median income from $45,539 a year to $57,427 during the 1980s, a 26 percent gain, while female headed families went from $23,804 to $25,636, a 7.7 percent rise, over the same period. (In the recession and recovery years, 1989-1994, married couple families had real incomes decline by 8 percent; female headed families saw a 14 percent decline.)

Educational attainment is also important. Families such as the Davenport's, the Timmons's and the Maders, in which the main income earner has a college degree, have advanced faster than those in which the main provider has only a high school diploma. In the 1980s, for example, the Massachusetts boom brought income gains to most workers; but the median income of high school educated employees only rose by 11 percent, while the college educated saw a 25 percent gain. Not only that, but a college education became more of an advantage as the economy changed. In 1979, New England families headed by a holder of a bachelor's degree had a median income that was 40 percent higher than that of a family headed by a high school graduate. In 1989, the higher educated family had a 62 percent greater median income.

When the recession hit in Massachusetts, those who had done best in the '80s also took less of a hit. From 1989 to 1994, the median income of a family headed by a college grad dropped from $73,658 to $69,652, a 5.4 percent decline. The high school educated family provider saw median income fall from $46,842 to $41,336, a 12 percent drop. As might be expected, the trend was even worse for high school dropouts: Their median income dropped from $27,510 to $22,664, nearly an 18 percent decline.

Two things have changed: "You've got a change in the job structure matched with a change in the wage structure," says Sum. One factor that has been especially important in the New England economy is the diminishing number of manufacturing jobs—which used to serve as a ticket into the middle class for blue-collar workers without advanced education. New England suffered a net loss of 339,000 manufacturing jobs from 1983 to 1994—about a fourth of the region's manufacturing jobs vanished. The region saw an increase of 645,000 jobs in the same period, but about 90 percent of them were in professional, managerial, technical, or high-level sales fields. Generally, the new jobs weren't open to those without advanced education or training.

The result has been an increase in inequality in the nation and the region. The widening gap between rich and poor has received a good deal of attention over recent months, and it is something that seems to be casually accepted by families such as those in Heritage Heights. Joanne Giovino mentioned "the CEOs you hear get these decadent amounts," but her disapproval was matter-of-fact. Lisa Mader puts credence in reports that the middle class is shrinking: "The trend is there's not going to be any middle," she says. "There's going to be the rich and the poor."

There is some exaggeration to that, but when economists examine the changing size of each income group's share of the total income pie, their figures show those at the bottom getting less and those at the top getting more. From 1979 to 1994 in New England the bottom fifth of families went from a 5.8 percent share of the pie to a 4.6 percent and the second lowest quintile went from a 12.4 percent share to an 11.1 percent share. Those in the top fifth held a 39.7 percent share in 1979 and a 42.4 percent share in 1994. This top fifth had a share of total income equal to that of the entire bottom 70 percent of the region's families.
This does not exactly mean the middle class is disappearing: If by middle class you mean those families with 1979 incomes between the 20th and 80th percentiles of the family income distribution, the middle class included 60 percent of New England families that year, and only 51 percent in 1989, due to upward income mobility. By 1994 the New England middle class was back up to 53 percent, as a rising number of families were bumped back out of the upper income class.

When the demographics of families at different income levels are examined closely, what you see is the emergence of two different groups in the middle class. On the upper end are the well-educated families whose job skills mesh well with the changing economy. On the lower end are those who don’t have two wage-earners, who have less education, or who do the kind of work that either doesn’t command high wages or that can be eliminated by new technology.

THE SPLIT-LEVEL SUBURB

Some of the forces that shape the lives of families on Heritage Road and so many places like it can be explained by labor market economists. But there is, of course, more to middle-class life than what kind of paychecks people are drawing.

As I was driving up and down Heritage Road, I was wondering what an anthropologist, or a poet, would make of a place like this. The homes are different, in a way, as the families in each of them; the houses are different colors, with different types of shutters and front doors. But when you look carefully you see the same architecture from house to house. Each has a driveway leading to a garage that is under the main floor. Each has a set of windows on the garage level and more prominent windows above. These are all split-level houses. You walk up a few steps to get to the front door and inside, a few more steps take you into the living room. The bedrooms are down the hall, the playroom or den is on the lower floor along with the entrance from the garage.

What symbolic meaning can be read into this split-level living? One of the things you realize after talking to families in Heritage Heights is that there is a dual reality to this place, as there is to many places that have not been inhabited by residents of prominence and power. It is a good location: It is close to the center of town, and just beyond the backyards of Heritage Road is the Orland Marshall Middle School, the most desirable sort of buffer zone for young families. But it has not been an ideal location: A couple of miles to the north is the Iron Horse Park and Schaeffer Landfill site, which is on the federal Superfund list of hazardous waste sites. Pushing for the cleanup of that site and another industrial site nearby were the causes that pulled Mary Davenport into community activism. Mary is forthright about revealing that she is one of several in the area who is coping with “a cancer,” as she puts it—she has had two major operations due to a brain tumor. She believes the pollution was the cause of health problems she has been fighting for almost 15 years.

Joaanne Giova mentions, as well, three neighbors on her street who have died of cancer. Could Heritage Heights have been affected by the nearby Superfund site? Who is to say? The young families who have moved in tend to look at the problem as one that “has all been cleaned up now.” And Mary Davenport herself told her husband she would not want to leave the neighborhood she has fought for, and come to call home. “We cleaned up our town both politically and environmentally,” she says. “I love this community. This is where I want to remain.”

As well, there seems to be, at times, two levels of truth to the economic facts of today’s middle-class life. Liberals have sounded the alarm about stagnating wages and growing inequality, hoping to arouse middle-class demands that government intervene in the economy on behalf of a more equitable distribution of income and wealth. Conservatives have sought to debunk the idea that economic forces are producing inequality and an endangered middle class. (Some conservative economists have looked at average, or mean, family income and found signs of great progress in the 1980s. As is usually the case with economics and statistics, much depends on what measures are thought to be important. Using average income figures, instead of median income, can be misleading: If you are studying the incomes of three people, one who earns $20,000 a year, one who earns $30,000 and one who makes $40,000, you can see that the average income of the group is $30,000. If in a new year the top earner gets a raise to $70,000, the average income goes...
up to $40,000. But only one person got richer.)

The conservative critique, however, has another dimension. Perhaps, some suggest, middle-class Americans are the victims of their own rising expectations. Houses are bigger, appliances more advanced and more expensive, and more people demand things that used to be luxuries, such as central air conditioning, or two cars. “Our appetites are growing rapidly,” wrote Karl Zinsmeister in The American Enterprise, which is published by a conservative think tank. “We expect much more than earlier generations did.”

Among the families I met on Heritage Road, I found that, as people look at their parents’ standard of living and compare it to their own, there is a willingness to admit that expectations have a lot to do with it. “The demands are different now than when our parents were young,” says Debra Timmins. “It’s unpopular to have money be that tight now. In our parents’ generation I think it was more common.”

Lisa Mader doesn’t consider her family to be living lavishly. They haven’t bought a big-screen TV, making do instead with a 12-inch Sylvania. They use the furniture they bought when she and Donald got married. But even with lower wages in the new economy, she says, “I think our generation spends more, too—and uses their charge cards more freely.” When Kathleen Jenkins considers her parents, she says, “They still pinch pennies the way they did 30 years ago.” Says William Jenkins, “Our generation is a wasteful generation.”

There is an ambivalence that some middle-class families express about the very importance of a rising standard of living, and in younger families perhaps a resignation. “I think it’s probably always been difficult,” Heritage Road resident Anne Marie O’Neill, 30, told me. “It’s tough to save money and it’s tough to raise a family.” Anne Marie and her husband John, also 30, have a small child and are expecting another. “To us, family values are important. We don’t care about two cars or a huge television set,” she says. “We’re not too concerned with what the Joneses do.” Asked if she expects to achieve a higher standard of living than her parents did, she answers simply, “Probably not.”

A QUESTION OF EXPECTATIONS

Before ending my interviews with Billerica families, I turned to two especially thoughtful members of the wider community. Gil Moreira is the deputy town moderator of Billerica’s Town Meeting and Mickey Ouelette is a teacher at Billerica High School. I wanted to know their views on whether “the American Dream” is a dead letter in places like Heritage Heights and in towns like Billerica.

The night I caught up with Mickey Ouelette, he was working what he calls his “third job.” By day he is the high school’s guidance counselor. He also handles driver education for the school. And at least one evening a week he staffs the Century 21 real estate office in Billerica. Ouelette and his wife Carol have three daughters: Moira, 23, Danielle, 21, and Nicole, 16.

Having just paid for Moira’s wedding, and with Danielle at Merrimack College, Ouelette says of his current income, “I’m sure I probably have gained, but it feels like I’ve lost.” He talks about teachers getting raises in the single digits through the ’80s—and some years no raises at all—but he does not count that a major factor in his general satisfaction. “I knew going into my profession I wasn’t in it for the money,” he says.

I asked Ouelette about the high school students he talks to. “The American Dream,” he says, is not in their vocabulary. “They don’t see the opportunities,” he says. “Maybe we did get hung up on that term in the ’50s, the American Dream, and seeing all that we could do. The kids today don’t have that sense. There’s so much distraction.”

When he looks at his daughters’ economic prospects he wonders if they will see upward mobility. “I don’t think they ever will. I’ll tell you why: I think we’re moving toward a service-oriented economy. Working for other people, you’re not going to do it now.”

“I see so many young kids opting for jobs that are not as well paid as when I got out of school,” he says. He tries to emphasize the importance of education and training to high school students. “Sometimes it takes some of these kids one or two years working at a Burger King. Then they come back,” he says, with more interest in continuing their education.

Gil Moreira could be seen as one of the winners in the new economy. He lives in one of Billerica’s “newer subdivisions” and considers himself to be in the upper middle class, which he defines as in the $70,000 to $100,000 a year range (he says he is “on the lower end” of that range). He has a Masters Degree in Business Administration from Suffolk University and works as vice-president of finance and operations for The Kraematon Group, a consulting company in Wellesley.

Moreira’s parents, who were Portuguese immigrants, moved from Somerville to Billerica in 1964, when Gil was in high school. In the 1970s Gil and his wife Susan moved to Billerica, where they have raised twin sons, Doug and Greg, 22, and a daughter, Cynthia, 15. Moreira tends to see the trends in the Massachusetts economy in terms of how they’ve affected his neighborhood. In the 1970s, he says, “we all grew socially and financially together.” In recent years, “our aspirations hit a plateau.” Job security became a bigger concern. And with his sons in college and other expenses going up, “It seems like all the
education that is coordinated with where the economy is going.

- Devise innovative job re-training programs. “It can't be done with massive government programs.” Find a way to create partnerships between the public and private sectors to make job re-training work at the local level.

- Promote growth and competitiveness. Government should stay with monetary policies that create the “highest sustainable non-inflationary rate of economic growth that we can manage.”

LESTER THUROW
Professor of economics and management at MIT

“In addition to international competition and a technology shift in U.S. industries, we have a national policy to reduce wages—it’s called the War on Inflation.”

- Build a new skills training system for the non-college bound, and create high schools that are world-class.

- The U.S. needs a national policy of aggressive research and development.

- Admit that we've had a victory over inflation, or that we're going to find a different way to fight inflation. The Federal Reserve's monetary policies put “brakes on the economy that limit us to 2.5 percent growth. At that rate, you're going to have falling wages.”

ALAN MACDONALD
Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Businesses are willing to hire “higher-value” employees, but there is a problem hiring workers for jobs at a lower level, for “what we used to call ‘floor-sweeping jobs’.”

- Create more skills-based educational programs in the public schools. The separation of vocational education from the rest of the curriculum hasn't drawn students into vocational training.

- Better job-training programs in the workforce. Small companies can't afford the time and overhead for training workers only when they're hired. “The state can help out in that respect,” with government support or incentives.

- Reduce labor costs. In health insurance, unemployment compensation, and workers compensation, the state should work to keep labor costs down. “Those are important elements of public policy where the state can make a difference.”

CHRISTOPHER HEINZ
Research Director, Boston District Council of Carpenters

“The decline in unionization rates goes hand-in-hand with falling wages.”

- Concentrate on a tax policy that is pro-worker and pro-family. The tax structure should encourage companies to let more money trickle down to the workers.

- Change labor laws to remove obstacles to unionizing. “Labor laws in this country truly need to be reformed.” Permanent replacement of strikers should be prevented.

- Provide government leadership that insists on a high-wage economy. Part of the role of political leadership is to be “jawboning” with business leaders to make sure that companies share productivity gains with workers.
TRUE Grit

Therese Murray’s Tough-Minded Politics

By Laura Pappano

The children, 36 kindergartners seated cross-legged on the floor in an elementary school classroom in Pembroke, feel compelled to tell their guest, Senator Therese Murray, their troubles. “My cat died,” volunteers one child. Murray, owner of an incontinent poodle, sympathizes. Not to be outdone, another child speaks up. “My cat died, too.” The state senator, whose official-looking navy blue suit with shiny brass buttons and gold trim perhaps makes her look as if she could reverse the feline tragedies, deftly steers the talk away from dead cats and to the subject at hand: Thanksgiving. We are, after all, in Pilgrim country and Murray, whose district runs from Hanson, Pembroke and Kingston, down through Plympton, Plymouth and Wareham and out onto the Cape to Bourne, Sandwich and six precincts in Falmouth, appreciates more than most the simple beauty of the Puritan work ethic. She has made her Dorchester upbringing and the image of her first job, at age 14 earning

“We have a different attitude toward responsibility. We make excuses for people for why they should not or could not do something.”
Therese Murray
State Senator, Plymouth
85 cents an hour in a hardware store, the central feature of her political persona. And as a major driver behind the state’s welfare reform law that went into effect November 1, it was Murray who initiated provisions demanding recipients take more responsibility for finding jobs and improving their lives. And even today before an audience of 5- and 6-year-olds at Bryantville Elementary School she can’t help but slip in a plug for hard work as she tells of Pilgrim children at the tender age of six toiling alongside their parents.

She is one of many political leaders today who are sounding themes of work and responsibility. But, as social programs seem more tangled than ever and as public perception of politicians is sinking, Murray’s dogged and detail-minded approach to her job has brought her into the limelight.

Never shy about speaking her mind, Murray, a 47-year-old single mother who looks a little like Bonnie Raitt in a business suit, is viewed as “an up and comer.” She is seen as a quick study on issues and someone who has learned the political ropes since arriving on Beacon Hill in 1992. Her key role in welfare reform earned her respect and made her an instant expert on programs for the poor, with The New York Times seeking her out for comment. She is now tackling the troubled Department of Social Services. And December found her jetting to Washington, weighing a run for the 10th Congressional District seat being vacated by Democrat Gerry Studds.

By January, she had decided not to run. To quickly raise the money she needed, Murray says consultants told her she “would have to put aside 90 percent of my time and not do my work here and just make phone calls and ask people for money.”

Murray says she wanted to run. “I’m disappointed that I can’t do it,” she said the day after she announced the decision. “I believe I could have raised the money but can’t very well walk away from the work I am doing here. It’s not my style.”

The fact that Murray didn’t run is, in some respects, less important than the fact that, money aside, she could run. Terry Murray, the parochial school kid from Dorchester who watches “Letterman” and not “Leno,” who battles squirrels in her attic and termites under the porch, who lays out her clothes for the next day every night before going to bed, is emerging in Massachusetts as a political factor.

Some are calling Murray a “new Democrat.” It’s a label she shuns as meaningless, preferring to describe herself as a “centrist,” a “bologna-and-cheese Democrat,” “a working- and middle-class Democrat.” She is, most strikingly, a no-nonsense pragmatist who feels the Democratic Party has wandered away from the kitchen table politics that are the party’s—and her own—roots.

Murray, who lived from age 2 to 10 in a Mission Hill housing project and then in Dorchester’s St. Marks Parish, was one of six children of Helena and Richard Hollum. She remembers both her parents as hard workers; her mother worked as a bookkeeper and her father seemed to always be holding down two jobs. Murray recalls that as each of the five girls—Murray’s brother died in infancy—turned 14, they got working papers and a job. “We bought our own clothes and earned our own spending money,” she recalls. “We gave our mother the money and she gave us some back.”

Politics, too, was an integral part of family life. One of her earliest political memories is of watching President Dwight D. Eisenhower being sworn in to office on the television set in the family’s public housing unit. “I remember how disappointed I was because he wasn’t who my parents wanted. I couldn’t tell you why except that he was a Republican and they didn’t think he would do a good job,” she says. “I was brought up 100-percent-rock-solid Democrat.”

John F. Kennedy was an important inspiration. But it is Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his “New Deal” politics Murray talks about most. She believes in the safety net he created, but feels it has grown “into this huge entitlement program.” At moments she blames advocates who urge those in the system to take what they can from it. But she also blames our culture nowadays. “We have a different attitude toward responsibility,” she says. “We make excuses. We make excuses for people for why they should not or could not do something.”

Murray understands the need for government help. But she wants recipients to also help themselves. She pushed this in welfare reform. And now as she works to reform DSS, she is sounding some of the same themes in her search to find a way to hold parents responsible for the children they bring into this world. While the state cannot make parents love their children, she says, “they will have to pay out of their pocketbooks; they will have to participate in some way.”

Murray, who said she charged ahead with welfare reform because she saw the system as “a prison for women and their children and a few men,” has sought out solutions by giving the state—the payer of benefits—more authority over recipients’ lives. While her original welfare reform proposal called more broadly for recipients to make strides towards self-sufficiency, the final law has specific requirements—“workfare,” “learnfare,” and “shoefare,” which make welfare payments contingent upon recipients’ efforts to find work, keep their children’s school attendance up and get them immunized. If a child skips school, for example, money will be deducted from the welfare check.

These provisions, among others, frustrate human
services advocates. Betsy Wright, executive director of the Massachusetts Human Services Coalition, says the law’s approach to “micro-managing people’s lives,” may be well-intentioned, but will end up being punitive. “In an attempt to control behavior, the effect is there will be some poorer families,” says Wright, who said deducting money from the $539 standard monthly check for a mother and two children will do little to improve already unstable lives.

It may be politically appealing now to demand accountability of those who benefit from social programs like welfare. But if the grand goal of such programs is to help those marooned in the system to get up and cross the street to live like the rest of us, the question arises: Is ordering them to be responsible the same as teaching them to be responsible? And how much intrusion into people’s lives does a $539-a-month payment buy?

Clearly, a fair amount. Not only did welfare reform include the working and learning provisions, but it also included a “family cap” and a time limit. The cap means the state will not pay for additional children born to a mother on welfare and the time provision limits the length anyone can be on welfare. Murray opposed these measures, which were pushed by conservative legislators and by Gov. William Weld.

The protracted debate at various times pitted Murray against the liberal wing of her own party, led by Sen. Lois Pines (D-Newton) and Sen. Diane Wilkerson (D-Roxbury), and had her trying to keep more conservative members from imposing the family cap and time limit. At one point late in the process, senators were asked to override Weld’s veto of welfare reform.

Pines and Wilkerson, feeling the bill was too harsh, sided with conservatives who felt it was not restrictive enough after Weld persuaded them to work with him on a “compromise” bill. The veto was sustained by one vote. Weld then filed a bill which was more restrictive than the original one and which included the family cap and two-year time limit. Today there is still tension between Murray and the two liberal senators. Both Pines and Wilkerson, who Murray said told her they would support the override only to later change their minds, declined to be interviewed for this story.

Murray, who calls the vote a “huge” moment in welfare reform, is clearly miffed even months later and says she doesn’t discuss the subject with Pines or Wilkerson. “I had called both of them and asked if they would support the override. They had committed their votes,” she says. “We got a bill that was much worse, with a two-year limit and a family cap.” Despite her objections to these features, she ended up voting in favor of the Weld bill, feeling the overall changes to the system were for the better.

For those who need welfare, the check now comes with more strings. For taxpayers tired of paying for something they don’t understand, the law may give them a feeling that government money is being more carefully spent. It is hard to know if the law will change the culture of welfare. Few debate the premise that work is better than the dole. But exactly how much can we expect of people whose lives have fallen off track? Even the most able citizens feel overwhelmed these days by the basic jobs of working every day, raising children, caring for aging parents and contributing to the community. Many can get by without government assistance, but some cannot. Just because Murray pulled herself up by the bootstraps, must everyone?

Sen. Therese Murray urged liberal senators to override Governor Weld’s veto of a welfare bill she helped craft. Weld prevailed, and an even tougher welfare law was the result.
Such questions could provide fodder for endless debate. But Murray deals in the concrete. "I am not a policy wonk," she says. "I am not a process person. I am an open person."

And that is how she sees herself. She describes herself as "a very partisan Democrat," but she is viewed as credible with politicians of both parties and as someone willing to listen and compromise. "She is not a reflexive ideologue," observes Senate President Thomas Birmingham (D-Chelsea). "She doesn't bring a rigid conceptual structure to issues. She views them on a more ad-hoc basis. That is healthy and produces a better result than if people come to issues with inflexible, pre-conceived notions."

This approach has earned her respect on Beacon Hill. Her colleagues praise her hard work and grasp of the details. Even grass-roots lobbyists who complain she is hard to get access to and doesn't invite them to work with her on issues of common interest, say they are eager to mend fences after the welfare debate.

"She hasn't articulated a vision for how she wants to see women's lives improved and we'd like to see that," says Kelly Bates, executive director of the Women's State-Wide Legislative Network, a women's advocacy group that found itself opposite Murray on welfare reform. "But I think she is potentially a very powerful person. She has a very forthright leadership style and her colleagues really respect her. She is seen as an upcoming woman leader in the state."

Although viewed as "tough"—even her close friends, including Marie Lovely, a realtor in Plymouth with whom she talks almost daily and goes on regular walks, urge her to "smile more"—she is generally well-liked. "She is very likable for reasons that are sometimes intangible," says Jack Corrigan, Assistant Norfolk County District Attorney in William Delahunt's office. Corrigan, who was a Dukakis operative in the 1980s, knew Murray as a political organizer. "You like her visceral without knowing why," he says. "She is tough. She works hard and there is not a lot of pretense."

Despite Murray's genuine real-person-trying-to-make-it aura, she is very much the practiced politician. She is a savvy Beacon Hill insider, liked by former Senate President William Bulger and well-connected among grass-roots Democratic Party organizers with whom she has worked for more than two decades. But at a time when politics seems to be increasingly about saying much and doing little, Murray has managed to attract attention without grandstanding. More important, she has convinced those watching her that she intends to get things done.

Even people who disagree with her on issues see her as a doer. Wright of the Massachusetts Human Services Coalition regards last year's welfare legisla-
than a roldex expert or a big mouth ready with a quote. She says what's on her mind, even when others keep mum. And she doesn't mince words.

One of her favorite targets is Gov. Weld. She says he was too well brought up not to be more sensitive to the plight of the poor. And she has no patience for his WASP charm. "He has all these funny little colloquialisms like 'That dog doesn't hunt.' But does anybody look back [at his promises] and ask 'Did he do any of that?'"

When Eagan calls with a ques-

"I am not a policy wonk. I am not a process person. I am an open person."

tion about DSS, Murray lets loose in response to a story that a social worker who was supposed to be fired was instead given a paid administrative leave.

"In chamber Tuesday, I just blew when I saw this," she says. "I am furious at this last piece. It is not isolated. It is endemic of what is going on. Nobody's paying attention. I'm not willing to give them money without serious management changes. We are going to go back and push it. It is not what [DSS Commissioner] Linda Carlisle will wish to see. It is going to be fundamental change in the way we do business."

It is vintage Murray: fire in the belly. Flame on the tongue. Observes Sen. Cheryl Jacques (D-Needham): "Terry doesn't play games. She ask for your support and will arm wrestle you for it." That is not to say Murray can't be genial with those politically opposed. Jacques says she has watched Murray spar with those around her in the senate chamber and then make amends to get together on legislation. "To fight with somebody and the very next day win their support on an issue," observes Jacques. "That is a survival quality for politicians."

Murray seems to have a natural feel for when to push and when to cajole. But then, politics has been second nature to Murray. For as long as she can remember, she has been involved. As a young kid she passed out flyers and voting cards and hung out at the polls on election day. And when she was 12, she worked the phone banks for Edward M. Kennedy's first run for the U.S. Senate.

At the time, she didn't know politics would be a career. After graduating from the Cardinal Cushing High School for Girls, a parochial school in South Boston that closed a few years ago, she went to live with an older sister in Redondo Beach, California. There she attended El Camino Community College, but never earned a certificate. Years later, she would attend the Midwest Academy in Chicago, a community organizing school, and Northeastern University in Boston. But Murray, who is now doing course work at UMass Boston, is still inching toward her B.A.

In 1973 she married Richard Murray, a Roslindale kid she'd known of for years who had become a Captain in the Marine Corps during Vietnam. The couple moved to Plymouth a month before their marriage and although they divorced in 1987, both still live in town. He is a practicing attorney, is remarried and has two daughters. Therese Murray lives in the four-bedroom reproduction English colonial the couple built in 1983. She lives with their daughter, Lauren, who is 19.

When her daughter was only a few months old, Murray was directing the Municipal Women's Project, a grass-roots, nonprofit organization aimed at improving working conditions and wages for women in local government. Through the early 1980s, Murray worked in cable television. In 1984, she got a job as a mitigation manager for the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. Among other projects, she was charged with helping communities plan for the reconstruction of the Southeast Expressway in 1984 and 1985.

Throughout this period, Murray was intensely involved in the state Democratic Party and worked on dozens of campaigns, large and small. During the time of the "Massachusetts Miracle" and former Gov. Michael S. Dukakis's run for president in 1988, Murray organized committee activity on the South Shore. Nick Mitropoulos, executive director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, was director of personnel under Dukakis and a key player in his election bid. Mitropoulos says Murray,
“was a great field organizer. She was a great political organizer and as far as I could tell, left no stone unturned. It was clear to me when she decided to run for election, without knowing anything I thought, ‘Well, of course she would win.’”

When the Weld administration arrived in 1991, they cleaned house. Murray, like many other Democrats, was out of a job. She took some time off, then began a job search. When little turned up, she dug out the real estate license she had gotten in 1973 and went to work at Coldwell Banker Plymouth Port Realtors. Marie “Mikki” Chaffee, co-owner of the real estate agency with Marie Lovely and a local political activist herself, said Murray clearly wasn’t cut out for the business. She only made two sales—a condo and a cape overlooking a pond for about $146,000. “Terry is not into selling real estate,” says Chaffee. “Her head is geared toward government.”

Early in 1992, Murray decided to run against incumbent Republican Sen. Edward “Ned” Kirby. It was what many describe as a bruising and vicious battle. Kirby at one point suggested Murray was a lesbian. And Murray called for an investigation of Kirby’s finances. John Buckley, Jr., Plymouth County Commissioner and candidate for Plymouth County District Attorney, said he and others watched Murray pull ahead and beat Kirby by 1,127 votes. What struck him, said Buckley, was that when she started, she was “a virtual unknown. Over the 11 months of that campaign, she built it and built it and built it. Particularly in the campaign forums she went right at him and earned the respect of a lot of people who observed those and saw she was tough and did her homework.”

Last election, she handily beat Republican challenger Richard Armstrong from Falmouth by 12,898 votes.

By the time Murray reaches her district office on the Plymouth waterfront, the afternoon is slipping away. She has more calls to return as she opens the glass door to the office, located in space shared with Studds. It is cramped and small, but spirited. A Thelma and Louise poster hangs on the wall along with a message about domestic violence. “Don’t Die for Love,” it reads.

Murray sits down at her tiny desk and seems to have a hundred things she is juggling as her assistant reads off questions she has saved up, as friends meander in, as the phone rings and rings and rings. “I haven’t looked at my schedule, I haven’t looked at a newspaper, I have just been running,” Murray says. “And I just found out Thanksgiving was Thursday. I have no food in the house. I have nothing.”

Murray may not die for love, but she may die from exhaustion. As those who watch her observe: She is a full-time legislator. Days later on the phone, after the ballot question to cut legislators’ pay has been filed, she mentions it. She says she’ll just have to get a part-time job to supplement her income if that happens.

On a practical level, Murray has always counted her pennies. In some ways, this gives her a very real perspective when it comes to social reform. It also gives her a beat on her constituency: She is a working stiff. Unlike the William Welds and John Kerrys of politics, Murray needs her $53,000-a-year job ($46,000 a year plus $7,000 for her committee chair) and the chance of losing it is one factor that played into her decision not to run for Studds’ seat. Money—and lack of it—is an acknowledged problem for Murray.

But if this is a strain in fundraising, it is an asset in her district, which is a curious mix of blue-collar workers, young professionals, retirees and Mayflower descendants. It is, according to Murray, 60 percent registered Independent. And she reflects that political sensibility. She is pro-choice, but she voted in favor of the death penalty. She is more conservative than some of her Democratic friends, but in a district with a strong history of Republican representation, at least in the Statehouse, Murray is said to have supporters in both parties. And talking with local Democrats, one gets the sense that her more centrist politics come as a boost to others in the region.

Plymouth Town Moderator F. Steven Trifilletti, who is also vice chair of the Democratic Town Committee in Plymouth and a candidate for Plymouth County Commissioner, says Murray “certainly reflects my point of view. Many of us are conservative fiscally, but more moderate socially.” And while Trifilletti complains his Republican friends poke fun at “the liberal Democrats,” he says a more pragmatic approach to problems by Democrats like Murray is now putting local Republicans on the spot. The question today is: “Are they going to be Gingrich Republicans on the right or are they going to be more to the center?” he says. “Realistically, that is where you have to be.”

These days, there is a lot about Therese Murray people find appealing, not the least of which is that she seems authentic. She has been middle class—and not according to Congress’s liberal income definition. She has had to work all her life to get where she is and she expects that her job as a legislator is to tackle issues and not to golf or be wined and dined. Murray, in fact, finds it curious that people seemed amazed when she took on welfare reform as a chairwoman of the Senate Human Services Committee. “I was surprised when people’s attitude was ‘Who is this person and why is she doing this?’” Says Murray: “I’m not going to take a job and not do it.”

Laura Pappano is a free-lance writer who lives in Newton.
The Price of Managed Care

It's open enrollment period for federal employees, the time when workers can choose or change their health insurance plans. In the atrium of the Tip O'Neill Building in downtown Boston, about 50 federal workers gather for a Health Fair. Representatives of major health insurance plans display their wares and answer questions.

At one table, U.S. HealthCare exhibits a stack of red, white and blue boxes containing the proverbial apple a day. Blazoned across each side of these boxes are advertising slogans that promise "A Health Plan For Living," with "No Claims Forms," "No Co-Insurance," "Private Doctor's Offices" and "Emergency Care Anytime, Anywhere."

When questioned about the gag orders the HMO includes in its standard physician contract—which prohibit doctors from criticizing the quality of the care the plan provides—the salesman looks puzzled. He doesn't know about gag orders, he says. In his view, their doctors freely criticize the plan. Shifting terrain from quality of care to physician salaries, he continues. "Ninety percent of our doctors think they ought to be paid more than 90 percent of other doctors."

A U.S. Healthcare enrollee listening in complains that she's never been able to see the same primary care physician twice. "Did you fill in the customer satisfaction survey we sent you?" the salesman asks.

Sheepishly, she admits she hasn't. He shakes his head.

At Pru Care, the salesman denies any problems with specialist referrals. "Why wouldn't we want our doctors to refer patients to specialists?" he answers one question with another. When asked about physicians' financial incentives and patient satisfaction data, he says that this information is proprietary.

At both Harvard Community Health Plan and HMO Blue, salespeople claim that there are no problems obtaining emergency services, staying in the hospital as long as one needs to, or waiting in line for necessary services. And, of course, all disputes are speedily adjudicated.

These impressive reassurances notwithstanding, the rise of managed care poses profound questions about the quality, cost and access to medical services for thousands of Massachusetts residents. Massachusetts now ranks alongside California and Minnesota with the highest percentage of patients enrolled in managed care. Like residents of those two states, many in the Commonwealth are now discovering that the move to managed care is adding to, rather than diminishing, their anxieties.

In recent years insured Americans have worried more and more about their health care. With the high cost of traditional insurance, employees have feared that loss of a job would lead to loss of health coverage. Under managed care, this concern persists and with its restrictions even those with full medical coverage worry that they could be denied necessary services.

By Suzanne Gordon and Timothy McCall, M.D.
THE EVOLUTION OF HMOs

The transition to managed care has been touted as the way to lower costs while improving health care. But the laudable goal of managing care—coordinating a fragmented and wasteful system, and emphasizing primary care and preventive services—is far from the corporate model that manages cost while quality is, at best, a secondary consideration.

Today’s HMOs are very different from the pioneering not-for-profit plans started by progressive groups, which burgeoned in the 1970s. The initial cost savings in HMOs were an unanticipated side effect of the tighter organization of medical care, often under one roof, and the greater emphasis on prevention. As medical care expenditures have skyrocketed in the late ’80s, however, lowering costs became the central focus.

Employers trying to reduce the premiums they were paying began to view managed care as part of the solution. Insurers and for-profit corporations rushed to meet this need by forming their own HMOs but with a crucial difference: Gone was the philosophical commitment to better care and in came the obsession with the bottom line and with it, the need to police the behavior of patients and care givers. Today nine out of the top 10 largest HMOs—and all of the newer ones—are for-profit.

Since the demise of the Clinton health care plan in 1994, the corporate version of managed care has become the de facto solution to our health care crisis. By the end of 1995, U.S. HMOs were predicted to have 56 million subscribers. Another 70 million Americans will have more traditional insurance retrofitted with managed care features such as preferred providers and “utilization review.”

Thus millions of Americans will depend for one of their most critical needs, health care, on for-profit corporations. These companies, by law, owe their primary allegiance to shareholders, not to patients; their legal mandate is to maximize profit.

Indeed they have become some of the most profitable companies in America. Revenues in the largest HMOs have been astronomical. A recent story in The Wall Street Journal discussed the multi-billion-dollar surplus that for-profit managed care plans have amassed that they simply don’t know how to invest. CEO salaries and stock options at the top seven for-profit HMOs averaged seven million dollars in 1994. Leonard Abramson, the CEO of U.S. Healthcare, holds more than half a billion dollars in company stock.

Even the terminology for the percentage of premiums spent on medical care—the medical loss ratio—reflects the orientation toward maximizing profit. According to The New York Times, the large not-for-profit HMO Kaiser Permanente of California spent all but four percent of its 1994 revenue on patient care. U.S. Healthcare, a large for-profit plan, spent less than 73 cents per dollar on care. The rest went for administration, advertising, executive salaries and shareholder dividends.

In Florida, in an effort to save money, the state government invited essentially all comers to start HMOs to care for indigent patients covered by Medicaid. Only after a series of blistering investigative reports in Fort Lauderdale’s Sun Sentinel exposed substandard care and deceitful and coercive marketing tactics did the state investigate and then decertify 21 of the 29 plans. Several of the plans had spent more than 50 percent of premium dollars on profit and administration. One Miami HMO had spent 77 percent, leaving only 23 percent for patient care.

To generate this level of profit, HMOs have had to dramatically reduce costs. Their methods include:

- Changing the way doctors are paid. Under the traditional fee-for-service system the more the doctor did, the more the money flowed. One need look no further than the literally millions of unnecessary tonsillectomies and hysterectomies done in the ’50s and ’60s to see how this reimbursement system led to excessive, and costly, intervention.

The not-for-profit HMOs that dominated until the late 1980s paid doctors a straight salary. Today, however, HMOs have pioneered what is called “risk sharing.” Under risk sharing arrangements, physicians’ reimbursement is dependent on how much it costs to care for their patients. According to a recent series of articles in the New England Journal of Medicine, most HMOs employ a strategic mix of bonuses and penalties to encourage parsimony. Bonuses are sometimes tied to limiting particularly expensive services such as specialist referrals or MRI scans.

An increasingly common method of risk-sharing known as capitation (literally, by the head) involves paying doctors a monthly fee per patient and making the physician responsible for some or all medical expenses patients incur. In the most extreme version, common in California and increasingly in Massachusetts, every lab test, specialist referral and hospitalization comes directly out of the physician’s pay.

The bottom line is that most HMO physicians are paid more if they do less. This pits the economic interest of doctors against the well-being of their patients. Greedy physicians would stand to benefit enormously by denying helpful, but expensive, services. Well-intentioned doctors who had the bad luck, or some would say the poor planning, to have many gravely ill patients could find themselves with little or no compensation at the end of the year. According to one of the New England Journal studies mentioned above, written by Harvard Medical School professors David
Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, "an internist with 1500 [U.S. Healthcare] patients might take home more than $150,000 from bonuses and incentives, or nearly nothing."

**Changing the type and balance of doctors who work in the plan.** HMOs hire a greater percentage of primary care doctors and fewer specialists and whenever possible substitute the services of nurse practitioners and physicians’ assistants. To weed out those doctors who spend too much on patient care, HMOs use a technique called "economic credentialing." Under many HMO contracts doctors can be dismissed with no explanation, little warning, and no recourse. Since HMOs rather than physicians now control patients, the loss of a major HMO contract may mean the loss of one’s livelihood.

Holly Roberts, an obstetrician in New Jersey, explains the phenomenon. Several months ago, a representative from a major HMO appeared in her office. With him he brought two charts. One tracked how many Cesarean sections contracting physicians performed, the other how many days their patients stayed in the hospital. “They told me that the only thing keeping me in the system was my low C-section rate. But if I didn’t get my patients out of the hospital sooner they would have to eliminate me from participating in the system.”

As a result of this kind of pressure, a peculiar thing happens in our medical system. Physicians who were trained to care for the sick, begin to view them as a liability. “A patient with bilateral breast cancer walks in your office,” one internist told us recently, “and you can’t help thinking what this is going to do to your cost profile. This is a terrible thought to have when someone is sick.” She sighed, “They’re turning us into people we don’t even like.”

**Erecting barriers to limit the use of services.** In order to cut down on usage, HMOs set up a series of hoops patients must jump through. The primary care doctor serves as the gatekeeper, deciding who may and who may not see a specialist. Getting an appointment with one’s doctor, or with a specialist if that’s been approved, can take weeks, even months. Visits to emergency rooms and many other services must be pre-approved. Enrollees who are dissatisfied with a decision limiting care may not be told of their right to appeal. Those who appeal may find themselves in a morass of red tape, waiting hours on hold or spending weeks trying to wend through the bureaucracy to reach the right person.

**Cherry-picking—selectively enrolling lower risk patients.** HMO television ads depict radiant young people at weddings and christenings, mountain-biking, seemingly everywhere but in the hospital. Marketing materials tend to focus on services, such as discounts on health club memberships, likely to be attractive to younger, healthier patients. Commercials never seem to feature seriously ill people or the frail elderly lauding the care they receive.

Last July, for example, the Orange County Register reported that University of California-Irvine Medical Center chief Philip DiSaia, M.D. sent a memo to physicians stating that their HMO could “no longer tolerate patients with complex and expensive-to-treat conditions being encouraged to transfer to our group.”

According to a 1994 survey conducted in Boston, Los Angeles and Miami, 53 percent of enrollees in managed care were less than 40 years old, compared with 43 percent in fee-for-service plans. One recent survey found that those most likely to be dissatisfied with managed care, due to long waits for services and other barriers to care, were the sick and the disabled. These more expensive patients might be expected to opt out of their HMOs more often, further facilitating cherry-picking.

**Limiting “non-essential” services.** HMOs routinely refuse to pay for non-essential services, but the definition of what is non-essential can be debated. Few would argue about cosmetic surgery; but what about experimental treatments such as bone marrow transplants in cases of advanced breast cancer? Long-term psychotherapy is another example of a service that is extremely difficult to obtain in a managed care setting.

**Denying payment retroactively.** Even patients who’ve obtained pre-approval for services may find their HMO refuses to pay the bill. A child in California received approval for surgery. Only later did her father, David Weir, learn that the services of the anesthesiologist had not been approved and would not be paid for.
The same applies to emergency room visits if the condition turns out not to be an emergency. In other words, if your crushing chest pain is a heart attack, fine; if it’s indigestion you’ll be stuck for the bill, even if it took the doctors two hours and 14 tests to figure that out. According to Dr. Toni A. Mitchell, director of emergency care at Tampa General Hospital, “This is a new type of cost-shifting, a way for HMOs to shift costs to patients, physicians and hospitals.”

- **Limiting the number and length of hospitalizations.** Many operations that traditionally took place in hospitals are done in the lower-cost outpatient setting. Pressure is applied to doctors and patients to limit the length of hospitalizations. Witness current controversies over so-called “drive-through” deliveries, in which women are discharged from the hospital less than 24 hours after giving birth. In Massachusetts, protest led to passage of a bill last year that requires insurers to cover women for up to 48 hours in the hospital after giving birth. A similar bill is pending in Congress.

- **Reducing time with the doctor.** Doctors appointments now often last less than ten minutes. The math is simple: The less time a doctor spends with each patient, the more patients each doctor can follow and the fewer doctors the HMO needs to hire. In Northern California, Kaiser Permanente has increased the patient panels of primary care physicians from 2000 to as many as 2700 patients.

**Consequences of the Move to Managed Care**

Managing care can improve quality in many important ways. Removing the financial incentives to overtreat and overtest has cut down on the rates of unnecessary, and potentially dangerous, surgeries and other medical interventions of doubtful value. Some of the problems of fragmented and at times redundant care so typical of our medical system in the last decades will at least theoretically be improved by coordinating all care through a single primary care doctor. HMOs have also, on average, done a better job of obtaining routine preventive services such as Pap smears and mammograms.

Quality, though, under corporate-controlled managed care has suffered in many other ways. In Massachusetts, more cases are surfacing of HMOs denying potentially valuable treatments and diagnostic procedures. In 1987 a 60-year-old man called his private doctor with symptoms suggestive of a stroke. His doctor instructed him to meet him in the Emergency Room right away. He was immediately admitted to the hospital where a CAT scan revealed he had indeed suffered a stroke. Several days of intravenous blood thinners averted further damage and the man eventually had a full recovery of function.

Eight years later the same man went to his HMO doctor complaining of troubling visual problems, symptoms highly suggestive of a recurrent stroke. No tests were obtained and the man wasn’t hospitalized, although the doctor mentioned that a stroke was a possible cause of his symptoms. That night his wife called the HMO stating that he seemed worse and had become nauseated. She was told the nausea was due to nervousness and that a visit to the emergency room was unnecessary. Two days later, after the police picked him up for driving his car on the sidewalk, he was hospitalized, and tests revealed he had suffered a series of strokes. At the time of this writing, more than a month later, he is still hospitalized with disabilities that might have been prevented.

Before managed care, the American health care system was already burdened by administrative waste. Now this phenomenon has become more exaggerated. A Newton internist, who requested that his name not be used, complains that his four-doctor practice has been forced to hire three full-time employees just to keep up with the paperwork from the various managed care companies.

John G. O’Brien, CEO of The Cambridge Hospital Community Health Network, laments that at a time when he needs more clinical staff to care for more seriously ill patients and to handle more uninsured patients, he is forced to hire more administrators. “For hospitals to comply with utilization review and the other complexities of the payment system, we need more and more administrators and UR staff to insure that we get paid. This inevitably drains resources away from direct patient care.”

To compensate for lower per-patient revenues in the age of managed care, hospitals throughout the country have cut pharmacists, registered nurses, and laboratory personnel from their staffs. These cuts compromise care directly. A nurse may now follow eight patients on a medical ward instead of four. Since less acutely ill patients are denied admission to the hospital, those eight patients will on average be much sicker than in the past. And since the most experienced nurses are also the most expensive, chances are that “nurse” may be a nurse’s aide. A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association discovered that many potential drug errors are spotted by skilled nurses at the bedside and thus prevented. Similarly, when state and federal health officials investigated University Community Hospital in Tampa, Florida—where a surgeon amputated the wrong foot, another operated on the wrong knee and a poorly trained aide inadvertently killed a patient by disconnecting him from a ventilator—they discovered that skilled nurses had been removed from the critical patient-safety loop.
The rush to get hospitalized patients, including some who are acutely ill and unstable, out the door sooner has also led to problems. New mothers may not have had the time to learn proper breast-feeding technique. Neonatal complications like jaundice have been shown to be dramatically higher. "They don't care whether patients are exhausted or fainting in the bathroom," according to obstetrician Holly Roberts. "Unless they're hemorrhaging or have a high fever, they want them out."

The disincentive for primary care doctors to refer to specialists can lower quality. A Boston woman denied a recommended surgical referral for a breast biopsy by her primary care gatekeeper was three years later diagnosed with breast cancer so advanced that two operations could not remove it all. After X-ray therapy, her chance of long-term survival is estimated to be 40 to 50 percent.

Perhaps no area of medicine has taken a bigger hit in managed care than mental health care. According to interviews with numerous therapists, case managers routinely pressure them to prescribe drugs instead of more expensive psychotherapy, even in cases where neither the doctor nor patient favors it. From the HMO's standpoint, therapy can almost always be viewed as optional. Difficulty coping, low-level chronic depression or patterns of destructive relationships tend not to turn up in mortality statistics or in malpractice awards likely to affect the corporation's bottom line.

Cutting the length of the average doctor's visit threatens two of the hallmarks of the original HMOs: primary care and preventive services. Harried physicians may not be able to elicit the information necessary for accurate diagnosis or to teach patients about their diseases and medications. Time is also required to instruct patients about things like diet, exercise, and stress reduction—vital elements of preventive medicine. Less time together may also damage the relationship between doctors and patients.

"I don't trust them at all," says the wife of the stroke victim mentioned above, referring to the doctors at her HMO. This woman's comments reflect one of the most fundamental problems of the new system. How can rapport—its therapeutic—be established, when the patient worries that the care giver's primary allegiance is to the corporation and to their own economic survival?

This fundamental shift in the care giver's allegiance is exemplified by the gag rules now common in managed care contracts. Here's an example: "Physician shall agree not to take any action or make any communication which undermines or could undermine the confidence of enrollees, potential enrollees, their employers, their unions, or the public in U.S. Healthcare or the quality of U.S. Healthcare coverage." One of the most disturbing consequences of such a gag rule is that doctors may not inform patients of a medically viable treatment alternative that the plan will not pay for.

On December 1, 1995, Dr. David Himmelstein, the Harvard Medical School associate professor who co-wrote one of the New England Journal of Medicine studies mentioned earlier and who is a primary care doctor at Cambridge Hospital, received a letter from U.S. Healthcare stating that his contract was being terminated. No cause was given. Three days earlier he had appeared on the Phil Donahue show where he criticized HMOs. After the incident received adverse publicity, Himmelstein was rehired by U.S. Healthcare in January.

The biggest consequence of the move to managed care, however, may be what it hasn't done. For years, the United States health care system has been characterized by haves and have-nots and managed care has done nothing to address the problem of the 40 million uninsured Americans. If anything, the increased financial strain on hospitals has meant the closing of public and smaller institutions that had previously offered some free care. Indeed, even among the haves, managed care is leading to increased stratification.

The unwritten rule in HMOs is that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Among those who are covered, there appears to be a new two-tiered system taking shape: Well-informed, assertive patients are often able to get care that would be otherwise denied. But some HMO enrollees, whether due to shyness, lack of sophistication or physical incapacity from illness, are unable to advocate for themselves. They may be stuck with whatever their HMO doles out.

Arthur L. Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, reports
attending a board meeting of a large Minneapolis HMO where the subject was enrollee appeals of service denials. "The questions [the board members] asked were not 'How much does it cost?' or 'Will it work?' but rather 'Does the person have a lawyer?', 'Are they likely to be in touch with the media?', 'Is this someone who's going to be persistent or just go away?' and 'Can they make trouble for us in the community?'" He added, "This is a poor way to make benefit determinations."

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

HMOs and other forms of managed care are steadily becoming the dominant force in American health care, and the for-profit sector of managed care now dominates the industry. Since the primary mission of for-profit HMOs is to make money, patients and their families will need to become more assertive, and more careful government regulation of the industry will be required.

According to a study released last November by the Center for Health Care Rights in Los Angeles, most states do not provide adequate protection for HMO enrollees. "In every area of consumer HMO law, but especially in the areas of access, quality of care, grievance procedures, the collection, analysis and release of quality of care data, and the provision of HMO information to enrollees and the public, the study found that critical legal and regulatory issues were not addressed."

Building on the grass-roots concern that has led various state legislatures to ban so-called "drive-through" deliveries and regulate other excesses of the industry, the following areas demand legislative action:

- All methods of physician reimbursement including bonuses and penalties should be revealed to potential enrollees. Similarly, patients should be made aware of all required pre-authorizations and utilization review measures designed to limit the use of services. HMOs should disclose the percentage of premium dollars devoted to marketing, administration, executive salaries and profits.

- Physician gag rules should be outlawed in other states, as they were in Massachusetts by an act of the Legislature early this year. Doctors must be able to disclose to patients all information relevant to their medical care.

- Marketing excesses, such as occurred in Florida, should be penalized harshly.

- Patients with grievances must receive timely decisions on appeals. There should be a mechanism both within plans, and another independent of plans, to settle differences.

- For some reasonable co-payment, patients should be given the option of consulting physicians outside the plan.

- Hospitals must maintain sufficient qualified staff to insure patient safety.

- An emergency should be defined as the presence of symptoms that a reasonable layperson would interpret as needing immediate attention. No pre-approval should be required in potentially life-threatening situations.

- Comparative data on medical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and yearly turnover rates for both patients and physicians (which reflect quality and satisfaction) should be made available to the public. Responsible independent researchers should be provided the opportunity to measure quality of care, as their data would tend to be less biased.

Due to the fear of creating a large government bureaucracy, in the 1994 health care debate serious consideration was never given to bypassing for-profit insurance companies altogether via a single-payer plan like Canada's. Opponents warned that such a system would mean impersonal, "lowest-common-denominator" care, a lack of choice of physicians, inflexible and cumbersome bureaucracy, and the inability to obtain some services and long waits for others—precisely the problems we are now witnessing in managed care. (Canadians do indeed have waits for some elective services but this is balanced by universal access to health care, free choice of private physicians and lower costs.) The irony is that to rein in the excesses of HMOs will require a complex package of both state and federal regulations.

In 1994, the effort to forge a new health care system was derailed largely due to the efforts of many of those who are now profiting enormously from the shift to corporate managed care. As the number of uninsured Americans grows and the public becomes more aware of the problems of for-profit HMOs, however, the next opportunity to achieve real health care reform may come sooner rather than later.

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Paul Tsongas and Jim Braude discuss "pro-business" politics, Gov. Weld and what's wrong with the Democratic Party

Paul Tsongas and Jim Braude are Democrats of very different stripes—indeed, there are times when it is difficult to imagine how it is that Tsongas and Braude inhabit the same political party. Tsongas, who served 12 years in the United States Senate, has carved out a role for himself as a someone who is as critical of Democrats as Republicans. He has on more than one occasion made favorable public comment about the performance of Republican Gov. William Weld. Tsongas has urged his party to adopt a more friendly approach to the business sector while holding to liberal policies on social questions, which, after all, is not too far from the Weld formula.

Braude, as leader of the Tax Equity Alliance of Massachusetts, is one of the state's leading scours of big business power and has also been a frequent critic of the Democratic Party—for reasons that are almost the exact inverse of Tsongas's. Braude sees Massachusetts Democrats as too willing to capitulate to the agendas of corporate leaders and Gov. Weld. In recent years, Tsongas and Braude

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have been on opposite sides of several public battles, including a TEAM-led campaign in 1994 for a graduated state income tax rate. Tsongas, along with most business leaders, opposed the grad tax—and so did the state’s voters. “People have been scared to say a critical word about anything that comes out of Paul Tsongas’s mouth,” Braude told The Boston Globe, shortly after the defeat. Speaking about Tsongas’s open encouragement of Gen. Colin Powell to run for President, Braude called Tsongas “a Democrat in name only” and said he expected state and national leaders to “move away from their uncritical acceptance of the gospel according to Paul.”

CommonWealth invited Tsongas and Braude to discuss with us, chapter and verse, the state of economic development and party politics in Massachusetts. They met with Editor Dave Denison just before the beginning of the year in the downtown law offices of Foley Hoag & Eliot, where Tsongas is a partner. What follows is an edited transcript of the conversation.

CommonWealth: Senator, you’ve been traveling the country and promoting a point of view that defines what you’ve called a “passionate center,” and part of your point is that, in your view, that is where a great portion of the electorate is these days—in the center—and that neither party speaks to that. Could you define for us more specifically what kind of political centrism you’re thinking about?

Paul Tsongas: Well I think centrism as normally defined as “split the difference” is not what we’re talking about. On the fiscal side, I think we
would be viewed as conservatives, committed to a balanced budget, not just for reasons of economic development but more importantly reasons of generational responsibility. On the social side we would be viewed as quite liberal, in terms of pro-choice, pro-gay rights, pro-affirmative action, pro-inclusion as an instinct. On the environmental side we would be considered to be aggressively protective of the environment. And the fourth component is election and campaign finance reform which, I’m not sure what’s liberal and what’s conservative here, but [means being] very aggressive in trying to change the current structure. So that’s not your usual definition of centrist but that’s how we line up.

Commonwealth: And part of that is that neither party is speaking to the center and neither party has moved to the center. What about that idea? I think Jim might have a different view of that.

Jim Braude: It depends on where the center is. I think the center has moved so far in the last couple of years that the public debates are between the extreme right and the moderate right. I think Paul is right on a couple of things about where the bulk of Americans are—environmental questions, campaign finance reform, without a doubt. But I’m not quite as convinced that the average American is as socially liberal as I think both Paul and I would hope they would be.

But the fiscal conservatism, depending on what it means, is the big issue. If it means truly balancing budgets, the vast majority of Americans believes the budget should be balanced. But having said that, do they really know what it means? While Paul has been one who has been quite candid about the sacrifices one has to make, as he calls it, for the next generation, you saw a CNN-Gallup Poll of a couple weeks ago that showed 82 percent of the public still supports a balanced budget and 72 percent of those 82 said, “But there should be no cuts that affect my family.” It speaks to the fact that this has basically been a debate with snake oil being used as the primary ingredient. Do these people want a balanced budget if it means what it appears to mean, at least according to the Gingriches of the world? I would suggest that the answer may be no.

Tsongas: I agree. I think without Gingrich there would be no balanced budget. The Democrats just don’t have the discipline to do it. But he’s also the person most likely to destroy the consensus for a balanced budget. Because there are two ways of doing it: One, you can do it on a shared sacrifice basis, where you then bring in means testing of entitlements and those kind of things. The other way of doing it is “winners and losers.” So you diminish the Earned Income Tax Credit and you give a tax cut to wealthy people. The latter is not acceptable. The latter has no support base, other than rabid Republicans’ intent on a revolution. But you pursue that long enough, I think Jim’s right, consensus for a balanced budget disappears.

Braude: I think there’s also another
question that needs to be asked, and that is not just where is the center, but where should the center be? My sense is that as the difference between the two major parties becomes less clear, debate also becomes less sharp and less convincing for most people who work hard, don’t have the time to get immersed in these issues like a handful of us do, and rather just go to work, turn on the six o’clock news and if they see a “Republican agenda” and don’t see a Democrat responding—saying there’s another way to do these kinds of things, there’s an alternate view of the world—then my sense is they accept this as the only realistic way for this to happen.

**CommonWealth:** A key area of disagreement that is implied in your comment, Jim, is that the Democratic Party here and nationally has moved to the center, and probably should be defining something different, and [to Tsongas:] I notice from your writings that your view is that it’s moved to the left and abandoned the center.

**Tsongas:** In this state and I think the country as a whole, you have enormous awareness of global competition, which back a few years ago was hardly in people’s consciousness. And now you have this sense that it’s not just competing in a domestic market, it’s competing internationally. And a widespread sense of the Darwinian nature of that reality. I serve on the boards of companies that have had to deal with this, not just companies that have international sales, but even something like Boston Edison is going to be in a far more competitive world than it was before. And so what you see happening is that people are absorbing this reality, and it’s changing their behavior. So, issues like productivity, issues like savings rates, issues like what kind of an income tax structure you want, [are] increasingly being seen as “How does this affect how we compete?” And that is a lot different than what was there before. The problem you have here is that the Republicans have in essence tried to take this awareness and push an agenda, which is their traditional Republican revolution that has nothing to do with competitiveness. And Democrats have resisted this reality, and part of what this new group of Democrats is about are people who come out of that, sort of grew up in this world of international competition and I think have a much greater sensitivity to it than some of the more traditional party leaders.

**CommonWealth:** You’ve heard that argument on Beacon Hill plenty of times—competitiveness...

**Braude:** First, there is no question that the awareness of this global competition is dramatically higher than it was even when I started my job seven or eight years ago. The question is not are they aware of the problem, the question is what do they perceive, both the public as well as their elected officials, to be the solution? There are some who continue to buy into this notion that, sort of as Robert Reich calls it, “the race to the bottom”—that we can continue to cut costs as dramatically as possible to make this a
more competitive state. I would suggest that Massachusetts will never be a low-cost state. So what it's got to strive to be is a high-value state. The continuation of the notion, a la Reich again, is that to purely attempt to cut costs, wages, taxes, et cetera, you ultimately attempt to become in competition with the Third World, and you can for those who believe that virtually anything government does to help corporate Massachusetts accrues to the benefit of its workers and the surrounding community, then the closer the connection is the better. But for those who believe that, a la Lester Thurow a few weeks ago, that the business community certainly, I think he said, has broken the post-interest, be it as a worker, as a CEO, or as a shareholder. And I think it's quite possible, as the Raytheon case pointed out, that you are going to be tossed around by forces that you have no control over. And the issue is not whether the governor or the legislature has been inattentive, the issue is what's happening elsewhere. So you don't have the control that you had traditionally. The key is, where is balance? Where do you not cut taxes for example, so you can invest in university systems, or in public education, K through 12?

Braude: Let me just speak to the Raytheon thing for a minute, because it's a wonderful case in point. While I think Paul can absolutely make the case generically, even though I wouldn't like it, that there are certain situations where government providing assistance to a corporation or a set of corporations is in the interest of not just those CEOs and shareholders, but their customers and the public, Raytheon was an example of the other extreme. Here's a corporation that is living through record profits, record profits, a corporation whose executives at the same time that they're asking for a sacrifice by people who pay utilities in this state and by taxpayers and their own employees, their top five executives making well more than a million bucks, the head of the whole place making more than five million bucks, who goes to the legislature and says the following, which I think doesn't pass the laugh test: If you give us $21 million in tax relief, which is what they sought and what they received, we'll stay here. If you don't give us $21 million in tax relief, we may have a need to move, I believe it was, to Tennessee. I find it hard to believe that any one of the men and women on Beacon Hill who participated in this so-called debate, believed that a $12 billion company, again, experiencing record profits, could find the pivotal piece in their existence here to

Tsongas: Massachusetts can not win a race to the bottom. And I think that strategy is just not going to work, and would be a mistake. The question is, where's the balance?

Braude: You see, the problem with this debate, or lack of a debate, is World-War II social contract, and you add what I believe, which is that elected officials and a disproportionate number of Democrats have helped that abrogation, then one believes you have to re-examine your priorities. The priority now, I believe, in this state is to respond to corporate demands, not to the needs of real people. And my sense is that reversing that trend is not only good policy, but also wonderful politics.

CommonWealth: But wasn't the corporate demand on Raytheon's part for a more favorable tax structure something that did benefit at least those who work at Raytheon?

Tsongas: I understand Jim's perspective, but if he had spent eleven years, as I have, sitting on corporate boards and watching the decision-making take place, I think he'd have a different view. Because people ultimately will pursue their self-interest, be it as a worker, as a CEO, or as a shareholder. And I think it's quite possible, as the Raytheon case pointed out, that you are going to be tossed around by forces that you have no control over. And the issue is not whether the governor or the legislature has been inattentive, the issue is what's happening elsewhere. So you don't have the control that you had traditionally. The key is, where is balance? Where do you not cut taxes for example, so you can invest in university systems, or in public education, K through 12?
be $21 million.

But let me tell you what happened as a result of this phony debate on Beacon Hill, and this is not an exaggeration, as ridiculous as it seems. Raytheon went to Beacon Hill at the beginning of this and said we need $21 million to stay here. It was actually a $40 million package, $21 million of which they got. The Legislature essentially said, “We can’t afford it.” Almost to a person. They then came back with new partners in this coalition, a couple of months later, and said, “We need $200 million.” And the Legislature ... almost immediately and almost unanimously said, “That we can do.” And so essentially what happened here is, a desire to help Raytheon, and I understand the political impulse, and I should say while I’m speaking here from the principles that I believe in, if I were a member of the legislature, I have to say it probably is likely that I might have cast a vote for Raytheon’s $21 million. But I surely would not have cast a vote for the other $180 million, which could have been used to insure the shoring up of things like public education, like fixing the 49 percent of the bridges in this state that are substandard ... and a whole host of things like that.

**Commonwealth**: How would you have voted on that, Senator?

**Tsngas**: Well, this is where Jim and I have, I think, radically different world views. Because Jim presumes that all of these incentives to the manufacturing community have no net effect on tax revenue. If that is the presumption then we really speak two very different languages.

**Braude**: You mean no positive effect, by the way, just so I understand, you mean...

**Tsngas**: What you’re saying in essence is that these incentives have been given and had they not been given we would still have exactly the same revenues. I mean that’s such a fundamental disagreement that we’re obviously not going to bridge that gap. Because I’ve sat in meetings with people who make these decisions, and over 11 years you’ve been in a lot of those discussions, and the fact is, people want to stay in Massachusetts. They’re rooted here, they like the life style, they like Cape Cod, et cetera. But there comes a point at which your shareholders begin to question. If you can do the same thing somewhere else, at a much lower cost, what is the rationale? And at some point, you, the CEO or the directors, are at risk because the shareholders begin to say this is an irrational series of decisions that are being made.

**Braude**: I would find your argument to be much more compelling if Raytheon had come in and said “We need $421 million,” not $21 million, to stay a viable corporation in Massachusetts. But as I said to one of their lobbyists, I don’t think you can say to me with a straight face that the absence of $21 million the day before the final vote caused their spokesperson to say “We don’t know where we’re going to be,” and the passage of a package that got them $21 million caused her to say “We finally got what we need; we can stay in Massachusetts.” That really just doesn’t pass the laugh test.

**Tsngas**: But, see, I guess people laugh at different places. The fact is if you’re a shareholder at Raytheon you can get up and say to management, “$21 million doesn’t mean very much to you, apparently.” How do you answer that?

**Braude**: I’ll tell you how I would answer it. I would answer it in the way I assume you would answer it in most cases. That in addition to the pure bottom line, another bottom line is your responsibility to your surrounding community. It gets back to leadership, and whether leadership is political leadership or corporate leadership or whatever it is, there has got to come a point in my judgment when employees are not seen purely as disposable assets, or as costs that have to be cut, but rather as assets or parts of a business that you invest in even if it means a few fewer dollars in the bottom line.

**Tsngas**: See, where you and I differ is I grew up in a city that lost its manufacturing base. So what I hear you saying is “These companies are going to be around anyway.”

**Braude**: No, I’m not saying that.

**Tsngas**: But that’s implied in a lot of the language. And what I’m saying is, I know, from childhood, that a lot of these companies don’t survive. You saw Wang Laboratories go through this, you saw Digital go through it. Companies that were loathe to begin restructuring, even though it was clear to them that their sales per employee numbers were just not competitive. And yet you had this enormous sense of social obligation on the part of Dr. Wang. And remembering those agonies of people who had an enormous commitment to the social contract, having to get their minds around this new reality... I vividly remember saying to Dr. Wang at one point, because I represented the community on that board, that the larger obligation is to have a company that would survive, that could
employ people. As opposed to hanging on and having no company in the end, because Lowell had already experienced that many times over. So you now have Wang Laboratories; it’s much smaller but it is a viable company. Digital’s going through the same process. And all these forces that have intruded are foreign, whether it’s another company in the United States or somebody in Japan or somebody in Germany. That wasn’t there before. So I think a lot of the politics and policies of the earlier era presumed a different international economic world order.

**Braudel:** First of all, I don’t assume at all that they’ll stay. I wouldn’t be that naive. And obviously it matters a lot that they do stay. What I’m suggesting is that the decisions that this government in Massachusetts has made to attempt to keep them here are the wrong decisions. First of all, I’m one who believes that government should not be in the business of picking winners and losers, because it’s got a pretty rotten track record. Number two, the issue is not at all, “Does one give a tax break to make this a more attractive place?” The question is, what does one do, if one is in government and one believes that something has to be done, to achieve this desired end? And this gets back to... this whole question of low cost versus high value. And I hope we would agree that every dollar that a legislature and governor choose to spend through the tax system is a dollar that they won’t spend on something else.

**Tsongas:** See, you presume the dollar amount remains the same.

**Braudel:** No, there’s no question that if a company leaves... Are you suggesting here that if Raytheon leaves...

**Tsongas:** No, what I’m suggesting is, you’re in a situation where people make decisions every day in this state about where to locate a plant or whether to do the manufacturing here or do it some place else. And those thousands of decisions every day have an aggregate. And that aggregate shows up in tax dollars. Your argument, I think, would be accurate if there was no such thing as an aggregate that has a dollar amount. What I’m saying is that to the extent that you have an environment that is conducive to the business community there is a net gain. Bringing it down to a local level, Lowell, where I’ve spent a lot of my years trying to create a climate, is probably doing better than virtually any other city of its size in the Northeast. Because there has been since the ‘70s, with some lapses, a realization that pro-economic growth environment was important.

**Braudel:** But again, Paul, I don’t want to beat this horse to death, but let me beat it one more time. The issue is not whether one should be pro-business, or let’s at least say pro-jobs. The issue is how to get there. The issue is not do you pursue a pro-jobs policy, the issue is what is the pro-jobs policy? My sense is that the policies that are pursued in this state not only are not going to guarantee that the Raytheons stay here if they plan to leave otherwise, but are ones that, again, damage the infrastructure that matters the most, and continue to expand the growing and indefensible inequity that exists not just in this country between the richest and the poorest people and the middle class if there is one, but in Massachusetts as well. And I’m suggesting addressing some of those inequities, both in terms of pocketbook issues as well as the whole breadth of services and quality of life issues that you mentioned a couple of minutes ago, create a far more hospitable business environment than what I consider to be this, literally almost a mindless litany of tax breaks, because they’re easier to explain and they’re easier to do.

**CommonWealth** [to Braudel]: When you’re reflecting your views toward business power I’m sensing that it has to do with a very strong anti-corporate politics. One of the questions I’d like to ask about that has to do with whether at this time, in this country, there is a future for anti-corporate politics, or politics that is perceived as being anti-corporate. I think there is something that happens with the public where a lot of people out there know that big business power gets what it wants on many occasions, the executives are very well paid, there is that resentment—I’ve seen it in the people I’ve interviewed. And at the same time, you find in those very same people a sense that a politics built around that is untenable. Because it seems to not be attentive enough to what we have to do to create jobs, and because it seems to be the province of malcontents who don’t really understand how...

**Braudel:** Why is he looking at me when he says malcontents?

**CommonWealth:** ...who seem not to understand how, as Paul would say, wealth is created, and the whole world of decisions that he talks about in those board rooms.

**Braudel:** If anti-corporate means anti-job, which is what the sort of simple rule of thumb is for most people, I don’t know anybody who has that point of view. If your question is, do I believe that the priorities established by corporate Massachusetts, for example, should have a significantly lower priority and the needs or agenda of real people should have a higher priority, I think the answer is yes. Most people are not
ready for what you describe as an “anti-corporate,” I’ll use your terminology, agenda because there’s a colossal feeling of insecurity. There is this notion that anything that corporate America wants is good for jobs, anything that corporate America or [corporate] Massachusetts does not want is by definition bad for jobs. I think it’s a phony notion. I look at some of the statistics and I hate to throw them into this discussion, but since... Paul is now smiling at me. This was not from Mad magazine, this was actually in The New York Times, Paul—which is the same for some people.

Tsongas: That’s the kind of flip comment that exposes a bias [laughs], but go ahead.

Braude: I didn’t say me, I said some people. In 1980 to 1994, CEO salaries in America: up 225 percent. Same 14-year period: profits up an average, this is for all businesses, 25 percent. Real wages, down eight percent.

I think one of the issues that hasn’t been addressed is, let’s assume we do pursue the kind of policy that Paul and some leaders in this state perceive to be the best pro-jobs/pro-corporate policy; where does the money go? The inference is, for example, if you cut a capital gains tax, well, obviously it increases investment and investment is going to improve the competitive position for the company. I would suggest there is at least a reasonable amount of data out there that suggests that what it does is improve the position of stockholders and CEOs and, at least from the data I see, does very little to improve the quality of life for the vast majority of people who work or formerly worked in these corporations.

CommonWealth: Why was it wrong in your view, Senator, for Jim’s group to be out with protesters in front of a corporate building making the point that the executive salaries were so high at the same time they were laying off workers?

Braude: That wasn’t our only point, but you know what he’s talking about.

Tsongas: I think there is a bias in the body politic that a lot of these CEOs are greedy, are insensitive to what’s happening on the factory floor. And I think a lot of that is all too true. If you look at some of the salaries that are being drawn down, the sense of some linkage in a percentage basis between the CEO and the worker, that sense has been cut. And at the same time, you have what I would call the Donald Trump Syndrome: You spend your money on yachts as opposed to giving it to PS 104 for scholarships. Not only is there greed but in many cases [it is] accompanied by a sense of social insensitivity. That is what has fueled every revolution, because people resent, and I think properly so, that mind-set. And I think that’s also why you see the numbers changing with Gingrich—the “winners/losers” as opposed to shared sacrifice.

CommonWealth: But I’ve always had the feeling that you don’t feel that it’s legitimate to bring that in to the public discussion because it’s “the politics of resentment”—that you disapprove of Jim’s raising those issues from time to time.
talking about, [the] across-the-board tax cut. I think that is an example where you have pretty close to a dollar-for-dollar impact on what you can spend in the schools, in the environment, those kinds of things. The question is, to call these issues as they come up, based on some sense of judgment.

CommonWealth: I think you’re being gentle here. I’m thinking about the disagreement the two of you had when it came to a graduated income tax for Massachusetts, in which you were on opposite sides, and that’s where this event came up where Jim was raising the question of, why not tax at a higher rate these many wealthy executives who are doing so well? And when you have that discussion it almost inevitably brings up class issues and income issues, and perhaps resentment. I’m fairly sure I’m not imagining that you were disapproving of Jim’s injection of those income strata, class issues into the Massachusetts political discussion on the graduated tax issue.

Tsongas: Well, I think it was good politics. I think it’s bad economics. You get all these CEOs who watch this and say, “Gee, why bother?” Because they’re all making decisions every day about location. And if you’re a CEO and you know “Well, if I stay here, they’re going to picket my house, and if I go to Austin, Texas, where they have nice weather in the wintertime, I’m not going to have that problem.” Human nature tells you it has an impact. And a certain percentage of the decisions are going to be made differently. That was my concern.

Braude: These words weren’t coming out of Paul’s mouth, but many of the business opponents of the graduated income tax were saying we were engaging in class warfare. That was the first criticism. And my response was, we were responding to class warfare, not engaging in it. While the statistics have become tired, they’re important ones: Paul was mentioning CEOs a minute ago. Twenty-five years ago, the average CEO made 40 times as much as the average worker. Now it’s 140 times. Today the top 20 percent have as much income as the other 80 percent. The top one percent, 40 percent of the wealth. On and on down the line. There was an attempt from a policy perspective to balance some of those inequities and I think, as Paul suggests, we thought it was also wonderful politics, particularly for a Democratic Party which at best, tepidly — and I’m being kind — embraced this thing [the graduated income tax].

In terms of the tactics which was widely criticized, including by Paul — and at least he was open about it, as opposed to others who were saying it in the back alleys — we were accused of “business bashing” for focusing on one particular executive, Robert Palmer, who was head of Digital. The reason we did it was not to make Robert Palmer’s life miserable — and incidentally we never picketed his house, we stood outside his company, I think it’s a big difference, and had informational flyers. This was a company that just laid off 20,000 people. It’s a company that lost two billion dollars, with a CEO who was making many millions of dollars, who deemed it appropriate to take $50,000 not out of his pocket but out of the corporate treasury to defeat a tax change that wouldn’t have added one nickel to the bottom line of his corporation. While it may be technically legal, we thought it was wildly inappropriate and spoke to the fact that it was — I have to use the word, Paul used it before in another context — the greed that was driving this opposition, not a public policy thing.

Paul actually participated in a debate with us, came out with a guy by the name of Mitchell Kertzman, and what many said, including Paul, was that if this thing were to pass, that it was an invitation for executives to move their companies out of state. In fact Paul at one point said it’s a fast-track to North Carolina, and what we often pointed out was that places like North Carolina, Ohio, most of our competitor states that were doing best in luring manufacturing facilities, in fact had a graduated income tax. And so my sense was that what this campaign evolved into was a, frankly, an incredibly selfish effort by a handful of very wealthy business executives whose major concern was protecting their own personal bottom line. And they did it not only using corporate funds but to the detriment of the bottom lines of 92 percent of the people in Massachusetts. Namely, the vast majority of their employees.

Tsoungas: I get nervous when the intent of people is demonized: The idea that all these CEOs did what they did just to protect their own pocketbooks, when for most of them the difference was marginal. That none of them were driven by any motivation that had any social value to it. I just part company with you. The fact is, for a lot of these people the easiest thing to do is not to bother. I’ve always been astonished in some respects that in Raytheon’s case they chose to fight. Because, as you know, other companies just go to Arizona where they never become
part of the public debate. The question here is really balance. I think Bill Weld, left to his own tax-cutting devices, would have taken us off balance. Because I think things like K through 12 ultimately are the core of your workforce and if the issue is high value as opposed to low cost, and I think Jim’s obviously right in that case, I mean that’s part of the investment you make in competitiveness. But I have to hand it to Weld, in terms of the climate he has created; a business-friendly, or at least less business-averse climate resonates with people who have options in terms of where they locate.

CommonWealth: And that brings us to a question about Governor Weld. You enumerated four principles that you felt people in the center can come together on and you made the point that right now in your view neither of the major parties can be seen to be strong on all four, or really probably not even on three. Now what about William Weld? Do you see him as a centrist who is fiscally responsible, pro-environment, socially tolerant, and... what was the other one?

Tsongas: Campaign reform.

CommonWealth: ...and strong on campaign reform?

Tsongas: Well, obviously not the latter, since he just agreed to take PAC money. So in terms of campaign finance reform, there are very few Republicans...

CommonWealth: Three out of four then?

Tsongas: Well, certainly on the environment, certainly to the left of where the Republican Party is. On the social issues, choice, gay rights, he’s really been quite courageous.

On the economic side, on the fiscal side, I think generally a good record, but I am astonished at his adamant adherence to the Republican tax cut. I think it de-legitimates the commitment to a balanced budget. Because it destroys the social underpinnings. And it’d be one thing to be for it and sort of wink and nod, knowing I very important. So I would give him half.

CommonWealth: Does that bring him to three, or two and a half?

Tsongas: Three.

CommonWealth: Three? Does that mean you’re for Kerry?

Tsongas: Yes.

Braude: I think if the voters in 1990 had been crazy enough to reject the advice of Paul Tsongas and me, and accept the advice of Bill Weld and vote to roll back two billion dollars in taxes, not only would Bill Weld not have had a second term, but no one would be talking about Bill Weld as a future U.S. Senator or anything else. So it’s a wonderful and perverse irony, by the way, that his fiscal responsibility in many ways was forced on him by the public wisdom, for lack of a better expression.

Tsongas: Let me say I could not agree more.

Braude: Good. And the second thing, by the way, at the same time that Bill Weld was joining the chorus of excoriating the borrowing policies of the federal government, using that as an argument as to why we need a balanced budget amendment for example, Bill Weld is engaged in a wild borrowing spree that has been in my judgment the second most powerful reason as to why he’s been able to “balance five consecutive budgets.”

CommonWealth: How do the two of you understand [Weld’s] popularity and his making some inroads for what is otherwise a fairly weak Republican Party here?

Braude: I don’t think he’s made any
inroads for the Republican Party, at all. Republican registration has not gone up. This is a Weldonian phenomenon, in my perspective, not at all one that’s transferable to the Celluccis, the Malones, the generic Republicans. There clearly is a phenomenon. He continues to be wildly popular. I think it’s a function of the fact that the Democratic leadership... as one of my board members says, we were a one-party state under Mike Dukakis in the ’80s, and now we’re a one-party state under Bill Weld in the ’90s—unfortunately, it’s the other party. Whatever that means. And I think it’s true that while I’m not suggesting the Democratic Party has an obligation, nor is it wise to try to be an obstacle at every turn, I believe they have been a far too willing partner on many fronts. Paul said a couple of minutes ago, you suggested that Weld left to his own devices... would have cut taxes even more. In fact, the vast majority of the tax cuts were not Weld inspired even though they were Weld supported. They were Democratic Party inspired. Weld has said repeatedly that the single most valuable asset [he has] in this building, meaning all of Beacon Hill, is Tom Finneran, who is the Democratic chair of the [House] Ways and Means Committee. I would suggest that not only was Question 3’s defeat critical to the popularity of Bill Weld, but the virtual implosion of the Democratic Party on Beacon Hill is even a more important factor.

Tsongas: I think the leadership on Beacon Hill, I don’t have much contact with them, but I think they’re responding to the realities that are out there. I think they tend to be far more focused on where they want to cut taxes, where in Weld’s case, he is a minimalist. I think there’s a big difference. In the long run, the transferability of Weld’s popularity is very much in doubt. What you have is someone who is perceived to be honest, in a very sort of traditional Yankee way, and someone who’s very charming, someone whose sense of being bemused is so radically different than what you’re used to, and there’s something very compelling about that. Someone who’s good on the social issues. And someone who’s viewed as a bulwark against, “My God if we let the Democrats run wild we’d really be in trouble.”

Braud: There’s a wonderful example when one talks about politics, which we’ve done very little here, about how unfocused despite what you said a minute ago, the Democrats are on what they’re doing. We’ve just passed the year anniversary of what I consider to be one of the greatest assaults on democracy that I’ve seen in my 20 years in and around politics. Which I think has consequences far beyond the merits of the issue, meaning feeding—there’s a great line from Lily Tomlin, “No matter how cynical I get, I just can’t keep up”—feeding the wild cynicism that exists in this public. That was when Bill Weld...

Tsongas: [laughs] Why would he remember that particular quote?

Braud: ...Bill Weld, who was a wildly anti-pay-raise person, became a born-again pay raiser when two Democrats and a Republican, [Charles] Flaherty, [William] Bulger, and [Edward] Teague in the House, decided to deliver a $140 million tax cut. I’m not bringing it up because of the tax cut, I’m bringing it up because there are 197 men and women on Beacon Hill who profess to know nothing about the fact that a capital gains tax, whether one likes it or not, was included in a bill that was entitled Tax Relief for Low Income Families. And I think the fact that not one man or woman of that 197 to this day has chosen to attempt to undo those things—and I don’t care if you’re pro-pay raise or against pay raise, pro-capital gains tax, or against it—but that not one of those people, Democrat or Republican, has chosen to try to start all over again, I think speaks to the fact that the Democrats simply don’t understand an issue when it’s deposited right on the doorstep. I wish there was focus, as Paul suggests, but my sense is there are a couple of leaders who lead virtually every member around by the nose and that’s to the detriment of those of us who have spent our lives in the Democratic Party.

CommonWealth: I wanted to suggest an alternate theory on Weld and generally what’s happening in Massachusetts. Isn’t it true that liberalism in Massachusetts, and Democratic Party liberalism, has suffered from showing a chronic indifference to government expansion and higher taxes? And that people perceive that with Weld you have someone who is not indifferent toward government expansion and higher taxes? And that that’s one of the things that is really beginning to hurt Massachusetts Democratic liberalism in a way that may be, down the road, evident at the polls?

Braud: I’m going to give one of those answers that I despise in other people: yes and no. Paul mentioned before our bumper sticker slogan in a joint campaign that we worked on quite closely together, “No on 3, It Goes Too Far.” The big mistake that was made by those of us who consid-
er ourselves liberals then and now was that after we won we didn’t set out immediately to explain what it is that goes too far and try to fix those things. An analogy is that I live in Cambridge and I’m a strong supporter of rent control. I’m convinced that one of the reasons rent control was blown up is because most of us who supported rent control, liberals almost without exception, were unwilling to fix what was wrong with the problem and were too busy protecting the status quo. I think that’s the same thing with big government. Having said that, let me explain to you what I think is the biggest problem. I’ll quote one more person, [syndicated columnist] Murray Kempton, who said shortly after the November elections in 1994, I will accept that liberalism died on that November date if you show me one candidate who allowed a liberal thought to cross his lips. My sense is that while on the one hand we have not gone far enough nor aggressively enough to fix what we’ve created, at the same time I think the concern I have is that the bigger problem is that the few remaining liberals that exist have done far too little to advance their point. And if I have to judge between those two problems I would suggest it’s a failure to aggressively, passionately, and un-defensively, advance a liberal agenda. And equally importantly, the only time that those who believe in the best of government ever defend what it does is when it’s at risk, whether it’s at risk at the hands of Newt Gingrich, who is also “going too far,” or Question 3 in 1990. We never spend the energy to market the good things that government does. So I would suggest if those of us who are, maybe not statists, but those of us who believe in activist government did more time marketing the good and being willing to criticize the bad, we’d be in far better shape.

Tsongas: Absolutely, but the problem is that the people who are believers at either end of the spectrum spend their time marketing what they perceive as the good and not criticizing the bad. And so you get these pendulum swings. As you do now in Washington, people having gotten a full taste of Republican revolution and saying “That’s not what I had in mind.”

CommonWealth [to Tsongas]: Let me direct this question your way. When we were talking about what centrist Democrats can contribute to the discussion... There are times when it seems to me that the Republicans in the recent decade, very much with help from centrist Democrats, have accomplished really what is a stunning reversal in our political discussion, from the 1930s and 1960s. They’ve defined politics that benefit poor people as counterproductive and causing dependency. And they have promoted policies that benefit the business sector and wealthy folks as issues that are very much within the public interest. In other words, helping a large business is in the public interest, because of jobs. That’s a real reversal, where in earlier eras we had a discussion about the public interest being to deal with poverty problems, deal with urban problems and crime and all of that; and it’s not so much that the emergency is whether this company or this company is getting breaks. And to the extent that that’s happened and that centrist Democrats are a part of that, I’m wondering if it just dooms the traditional liberal approach to politics as Jim has described it.

Tsongas: Well, you’re talking to somebody who has spent a good part of the last several months fiercely opposing a tax cut for the wealthy, and in support of the Earned Income Tax Credit, and taking monies and putting it into education and the environment. And also someone who’s spent the last couple years arguing for means testing of entitlements, and leaving the cost-of-living increases intact, so that people who need it can have those benefits. Again the question here is one of balance, of recognizing that it is a very brutal international economic order, and you sure as hell better respond to that or kids in Lowell are going to go through what I went through growing up, in which the manufacturing base declined. But also to recognize that if you have no social equity, that a kid going to the public school system whether it’s in Cambridge or wherever, is not going to have access to the same quality as a kid going to school in a Dover, then eventually that system crumbles. Because the people are not shareholders in the larger society, and that is remarkably corrosive. Not just in terms of race or gender or sexual orientation, but the issue of economic strata. I think what people like me are about is trying to find a set of policies that is inclusive, above all is generationally responsible and avoids the extremes of both sides. So there will be times when Jim and I will have the same view, there’ll be times when we have a different view. But in the end of the day, it’s the people who I think have a larger and not predetermined view who will carry the day. And a lot of what you see in Washington now, particularly on the Gingrich side violates most people’s sense of what is appropriate and that’s why you see the pendulum swing the other way.

CommonWealth: Are you ready then to welcome Jim Braude to the sensible center?

Braude: I want to be called a “pro-business liberal” when I grow up.

Tsongas: Jim’s problem is he’s so smart that he gets away with saying some things that... He’s smart, he’s charming, and people like him...

Braude: Isn’t that a perfect point to end this?
THE

BATTLE FOR

BROCKTON

A Community Group Puts ‘Faith Into Action’

BROCKTON—Faces light up in the Bus Stop Cafe as septuagenarian Ginny Curtis sidles up to the counter to “say hello to my boyfriends.”

Returning to the booth where I have joined her for a chat on this bitter winter afternoon, Ginny removes a stack of tattered photos from her pocketbook. Each one tells a slightly different tale of how Brockton has fallen on hard times. They also testify to the resolute refusal of Ginny, and others like her, to give up.

There is the property on Father Kenney Way. Grim-faced teenagers occupy the porch, as if daring the photographer to come closer. The owner of this property doesn’t even live in town, Curtis snorts. His contribution to the community? Worse than nothing: $15,218 in overdue taxes and a rental property that until Ginny leaned on the landlord, had turned into a magnet for transients and drug dealers.

Ginny pulls out another picture. The house, which sits vacant, is located down the street from Ginny’s. Boards wrap several windows, shards of glass protrude from others. Scraps of trash litter the front lawn.

The house belongs to one of a number of Brockton’s absentee landlords who bought here during the boom of the early 1980s, only to skip town when recession pushed the city’s vacancy rate into the double-digits. The slide was dramatic: In 1986, the median price for a residential home in Brockton was $115,000. By the end of 1994, that figure had dropped to $75,000.

A lot has changed in Brockton since Ginny, her delicate-looking frame ensconced in a pearl-buttoned white cardigan, pink nail polish topping her slender hands, and red hair still flaming, was crowned “Miss Brockton” in 1938.

“Brockton used to be a great shoe city,” Ginny explains. “Now just about everything that has to do with shoes is gone.” Stacey Adams, Field and Flint,

Douglas Shoe—“they moved out one-by-one.” Everybody worked there or knew somebody who did. Of the 93 shoe factories that once operated out of Brockton, only one remains.

While Ginny and her friend from St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church, Sam Asci, fondly recall a time when Brockton hawked its productive capacity, “We have no illusions that it will be what it used to be,” says Asci. “It’s never going to be the same as it was then.”

Ginny was baptized at St. Pat’s. And she walked down the aisle there, too. The church stands at the corner of Main Street and Father Kenney Way, one of the few remaining symbols of hope in a downtown dotted with vacant storefronts and abandoned buildings.

Unlike many of their friends and some of their relatives, Ginny and Sam have refused to pull up stakes and leave Brockton to fend for herself. Ginny has used her considerable acumen to try to help her hometown.

Ginny has relied on her “contacts” around town to compile a dossier that has been used to pressure absentee landlords in her Edgar Park neighborhood to clean up their acts. Do they owe city taxes? Outstanding water bills? Has inspectional services paid them a visit recently? Ginny

By Jennifer Babson
probably knows the answers.

"We had to fight down city hall," Ginny explains, her hands fluttering in anger as she recounts the details of a three-year battle she waged to establish a community health clinic on Main Street, smack in the middle of Brockton's downtown. After much prodding from local activists, the city council finally paved the way for the center to obtain a zoning permit. The Brockton Neighborhood Health Center, which has been open since December 1994, serves mostly low-income women, most of them Latino or African American. The outlet for Ginny's activism in both cases? The Brockton Interfaith Community.

Mix Jesus Christ, St. Jude, and Saul Alinsky, and you have a taste of what the Brockton Interfaith Community (BIC) is all about. Affiliated with the Boston-based Organizing and Leadership Training Center (OLTC), BIC consists of the members of 16 Brockton churches and synagogues. In the six years BIC has been in existence, the group has managed to assemble a diverse set of Brockton's regular folks to wreak havoc on the city's old guard, bureaucrats, and bad guys. In a city where ethnic recrimination still runs deep, BIC has managed to help cement close relationships between working-class whites and minority activists. OLTC, which has helped to start similar organizations on the North Shore, in Worcester, and in Fall River, was also one of the first groups to press the legislature (in 1993) to commit additional funds to community policing programs in the state.

"By identifying, training and developing leaders and by organizing around concrete, winnable issues, BIC enables people to understand their own power and gives them the skills and allies necessary to use

Activist Wayne Carter, who runs a furniture store, has worked to bring community policing to the Walnut-Turner section of Brockton.
that power effectively.” So says BIC’s lofty mission statement. Self interest and coalition are two of the group’s buzzwords.

“We get people starting to dream about what their neighborhood could look like,” says Father John Doyle of St. Pat’s, a bespectacled, wiry Irish priest with a cadence that betrays his Dorchester beginnings. Doyle, who is 69 years old and fond of quoting Noam Chomsky, has an intense gaze and a direct bearing that seems to stir a deep unease in some of Brockton’s establishment (and some of his fellow priests). After 12 years of ministering to Bolivia’s poorest campesinos, Doyle landed at St. Pat’s.

“I’ve always been convinced that my church’s mission has been brought into existence to make a difference,” Doyle says. “[I felt] it was important for them to see how they could put their faith into action.”

BIC has gone out of its way to develop and hone the skills of everyday parishioners who are perceived as having even the slightest bit of potential as community leaders. Have they shown unusual finesse in arguing for a position they believe in? Do people follow their advice? BIC organizers are on the alert for those who may possess untapped promise.

Such as Diluvina Allard. A year and a half ago, organizers at St. Pat’s began seeking out Allard, a native of Puerto Rico. At once direct and vocal, she was concerned about the lack of after-school activities for children (including her own) in Brockton. Once it was decided Allard held promise, BIC had to “drag her” to an OLTC-sponsored training conference, BIC executive director Jeff Korgen recalls with a chuckle.

“Now I recognize what they were doing was a one-on-one interview,” Allard says. “They were tapping for potential interest.” It was the beginning of Allard’s transformation from concerned mother into community activist. Soon she was telephoning local business leaders, an endeavor she initially found intimidating. “Who was I to call the president of a bank and set up an appointment?” she mused at the time. Now she is a BIC Vice President and director of the group’s “Youth Campaign,” which aims to improve the quality of life for the bored teens of Brockton.

Martha “Marty” Crowell is another BIC graduate. Crowell, a gregarious Weight Watchers counselor, still recalls the moment when her friend Harry stood with her at the back of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and told her about a new group he was joining. The group was BIC. “It was a defining moment because it changed my life,” says Crowell.

Soon Crowell, whose previous political experience consisted of PTA meetings, had become a regular at BIC functions. One of the group’s—and Crowell’s—first campaigns forced the city to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to keep open a swimming pool for kids in the summertime. Eventually Crowell became BIC’s second president. Then, in 1993, she decided to make a grass-roots run for a city council seat. Employing the one-on-one philosophy she honed in BIC, Crowell trounced a well-known incumbent. “I’m in politics now and I would never have dreamed I would be,” says Crowell.

BIC’s supporters may speak in glowing terms about the group, but its critics complain that it is “too confrontational,” a lament BIC members concede with a wink and an aside. For there is power in numbers and a loud enough voice and BIC has both. They have trained their efforts on specific issues that matter to their community: keeping a local swimming pool open; establishing a crime watch in a particular neighborhood; winning support—and dollars—for a program to encourage local renters to become home owners. In doing so, BIC may have forged an alliance that has thwarted the old way of doing business in Brockton and, in the process, hastened the end of at least one political career.

A POWER STRUGGLE

It’s all, they say, about R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Ask former mayor Winthrop Farwell Jr.

Elected in 1991, Farwell never liked BIC, and never attempted to hide that fact. In October of 1994, BIC officials say Farwell promised to work with BIC on a variety of issues, including the creation of a home ownership initiative which has since become the group’s central cause. As BIC officials envisioned it, the program would provide about $3 million worth of below-market mortgages from several major banks, lowering closing costs and providing additional financing to encourage low-income renters to become home buyers.

Six months later, Farwell (who refused comment for this story), publicly disavowed the campaign and said the city would not commit the $175,000 in federal housing funds needed to leverage mortgages under the program. Farwell cited more pressing city concerns, including a water shortage (which he said prevented further development in Brockton) and falling property values. More important, he refused to sign an application requesting state funds for the program.

Further angering BIC leaders, Farwell pulled out of a scheduled appearance at one of BIC’s annual meetings, which typically draw upward of 500 people. The gloves were off on both sides. Farwell dashed off a letter to BIC that accused the group of being less than honest about its agenda. At a board meeting, BIC leaders made the decision that it was time to publicly take on the mayor, in print whenever possible.

On May 11, the editorial pages of The Boston Globe advised the mayor to “reconsider his position. The
program helps the types of residents a mayor should covet.” But The Globe also advised BIC to “tone down” their pressure on Farwell. That same day, in an editorial entitled “BIC’s failure,” the Brockton Enterprise, a city institution, lambasted the group, saying it had “bullied, lied to, and abused” Farwell “in BIC’s single-minded effort to complete its agenda,” namely the home ownership program.

Pulling a coup, BIC convinced Mary Padula, Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD) secretary, to meet with the group’s leaders. The visit with Padula resulted in the lifting of a state ban on new water connections to Brockton, thus satisfying one of Farwell’s central objections. More importantly, Padula publicly came out in support of establishing the housing program in Brockton and urged Farwell to do the same.

Farwell still wouldn’t budge. Neither would BIC.

“We never made a public announcement to endorse anybody,” says Wayne Carter, an active BIC member who attends Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, “but the word went out.”

“The word” was Yunits, Jack. A scrappy local lawyer who announced his challenge to the well-known Farwell to little fanfare the previous June, Yunits was campaigning on a platform of cleaning house and “Bringing Brockton into the 21st Century.” He was the new guy, the underdog, the man whose number one point in his 21-point plan for Brockton was to “establish Brockton’s new look.”

Many of BIC’s most ardent members worked for Yunits: registering voters and getting them out on election day, putting up signs, introducing Yunits to their friends. Yunits struck a chord not only with BIC activists but with the young professionals who cluster on Brockton’s well-manicured west side. Unlike with Farwell, whose stiff countenance was trademark, they could relate to the smirky, friendly, sometimes-inarticulate-Baby-Boomer Yunits. More important, Farwell’s confrontations with BIC served to highlight his crotchety style. In the non-partisan September primary, Yunits outpolled Farwell by 1,572 votes.

Recoiling from that shocker, Farwell did what any politician running for his life is inclined to do: pander. In an October press conference with BIC members, he reversed course on the home loan program and pledged to request $150,000 in EOCD funds for the initiative, nearly double the amount of a BIC request. (In January, EOCD approved a $100,000 grant to help start the Brockton program.) And in a symbolic gesture, Farwell made sure to be on hand for BIC’s sixth annual convention—which was scheduled less than two weeks before the general election.

More than 500 people gathered at Temple Beth Emanuah for the two-hour-and-twenty-minute affair, which took the form of a BIC pep-rally cum political tumult test for mayoral candidates. The idea? Put Farwell and Yunits on record as to specific items on BIC’s agenda.

In a reversal of fortune, the political audience, not the politicians, tightly controlled the political discourse. Farwell and Yunits were props for BIC’s show.

“Now, even the mayor is behind us,” Dr. Margaret

Diluvina Allard is a newly elected BIC vice president.

Howard of Messiah Baptist Church crooned to the assembled, in a ten-minute skit called “BIC Accomplishments and Vision.” “The spirit of the Lord is powerful stuff!”

In a skit with Howard, the Rev. Bill McCoy emphasized the group’s core philosophy: BIC is an instrument of the Lord, and the Lord helps those who help themselves. In other words, “The vision of Isaiah is all good stuff, but BIC makes it happen.”

Then Doyle, of St. Pat’s, updated the group on the subject that had fanned so much of the friction with city leaders, the “Home Ownership Campaign.”

Doyle ran through the specifics of the mortgage program in Spanish and then in English. “As you know,” he chided, “in the beginning our mayor was opposed.” The most important thing, he reminded the group (a theme drummed throughout the evening): “We are now a powerful organization. A reality to be reckoned with in this city.”

Farwell and Yunits took to the stage to submit to BIC’s questions.
Lined up next to one another on a stage packed with gleeful deacons and pastors, the pair cut a stark physical contrast. Farwell, a brawny former police sergeant, towered over his pint-sized opponent by what appeared to be a foot or more. As the BIC moderator wheeled out a four-foot “scorecard,” audience members received their own cards and pencils with which to keep track.

One at a time, five BIC members went up to the microphone to exact their questions. Several struggled with their English, others smiled broadly at the providence of it all. This was Brockton’s rank and file: black, white, Latino, elderly. Would the next mayor continue Community Development Block Grant funding for a local pool? Would he give BIC members access to the city’s department heads to discuss how their planning might intersect with BIC’s agenda? What about earmarking additional city funds for the mortgage program once the state money had been half spent?

Only yes or no answers were permitted, with one minute to elaborate. In activist parlance it was an old-fashioned “accountability session.”

When it was time for the candidates to heed BIC’s call, both did, agreeing to all their demands. And by the end of his brief closing remarks, a genuflecting Farwell had uttered the three magic words. “I am sorry.”

It was too late.

Nine days later, Farwell lost re-election by the one of the largest mayoral margins in Brockton history, losing all 28 precincts. Yunits won 57 percent of the vote compared to the 42 percent captured by Farwell.

(In January, Farwell was appointed Commissioner of Public Safety by Gov. Weld, who he backed in 1994.)

**EVERYONE HAS THEIR TURF**

While local politicians have taken a decidedly more diplomatic turn toward BIC in recent months, some of the group’s critics remain non-plussed. They say the group has turned into a credit-grabbing, loud-mouthing media hound. Says one city council member who publicly supports BIC’s efforts: “In their minds they are here to help the city.” Another city council member remembers attending a BIC meeting with one of her colleagues, only to have him whisper, “You think they’re really from Brockton?”

Others say BIC has simply gone about trying to improve things the wrong way.

“I don’t believe that public confrontation is always the best way to change things in this country,” says the Rev. James Flavin, of St. Coleman’s Roman Catholic Church. “You get much more done working with people than fighting against them.” Flavin, who wears a bulletproof vest when he goes out for his evening stroll, concedes that the city needs help. So why do some of Brockton’s leaders still resent a community group that is trying to improve Brockton’s quality of life?

“Everyone’s got their own little turf and nothing is getting done,” Flavin says.

But Flavin says he has no political solutions. “The people who are on welfare are angry because there is not enough to go around and the people who are working are angry because ‘I am working and you are not!’”

As in most places, there is animosity between Brockton’s old-timers and the city’s newest arrivals. Where once the city was almost wholly white, Brockton now is teeming with a new wave of immigrants: Puerto Ricans, Haitians, and Cape Verdians, among others. And the migration of African Americans from Boston to Brockton has given the city, with over 12,000 African Americans, one of the largest concentrations of blacks in Massachusetts outside of Boston.

While the city is still majority white, many believe that is now barely the case—the current makeup is difficult to establish by perusing the city’s 1990 census statistics. But even six years ago, it was evident that Brockton was in for some changes. The proportion of minorities in Brockton increased 135 percent in the decade between 1980 and 1990, according to the Old Colony Planning Council, a regional development group. And the percentage of Hispanics, who now make up at least 20 percent of the city’s population, according to unofficial estimates, more than doubled during that decade. Significant economic changes occurred during that time as Brockton became more dependent on state assistance. By 1994, state aid accounted for just over 40 percent of the city’s income.

Moreover, as the population of Brockton has steadily increased (to about 95,000 in 1995), the city’s unemployment rate, 6.3 percent in November 1995, has continued to lead the state average (5.1 percent). Education levels here are among the lowest in Massachusetts, with only 12.9 percent of Brockton residents 25-and-over holding a college degree. And there are few factory jobs for blue-collar workers. The city’s largest employers: Local government and area hospitals. The only shoe company left in town—FootJoy—employs 225 workers. Brocktonians are hoping that a commuter rail line and a federal courthouse slated to begin construction in the city soon, will give Brockton an economic boost.

It was precisely the dissatisfaction bred by Brockton’s changing demographics that intrigued organizers, says Scott Spencer, BIC’s first executive director. “Clearly the power was not with the people.”

In 1988, Spencer and OLTC director Lew Finfer began a two-year period of “relationship building” with the city’s clergy. Spencer’s pitch played directly
into the self-interest of local church leaders, who were worried about declining membership and were mindful of the fact that crime was frightening would-be parishioners away. The interest was keen enough and the turf clean enough (Brockton had not witnessed any large-scale organizing efforts, unlike many of the state’s other manufacturing and mill cities). Dues were established, paid by the group’s member congregations and ranging anywhere from $250 to $2,500 per congregation, to help pay for the services of one full-time organizer. Donations and denominational grants covered the rest.

A nonprofit, the group has an interesting take on accepting financial contributions: They rebuff spare change. When a local utility company recently sent the group a check for $100, “we sent it right back,” current organizer and executive director Jeff Korgen explains. “That’s like giving to a choral group.”

BIC’s organizational structure is reminiscent of some unions, and groups such as the Industrial Areas Foundation, which was set up by Chicagoan Saul Alinsky in the 1940s. BIC works in concert with a local organizing committee from each member church, a relationship that gives individual churches access to a power in numbers they would not otherwise possess. When the local from Messiah Baptist decided that the Brockton city schools should do more to hire minority teachers, the larger group swung into action, pressing their local school board representatives to back the hiring of an acting superintendent who was perceived as sympathetic to their demands.

Although they are an organization that relies on religion as a primary motivator, BIC is entirely pragmatic, to the chagrin of its critics and even some of its members. “We don’t take on something that is going to be a losing issue,” Korgen explains. As a result, highly charged moral issues, so-called “Family Values,” and abortion are topics you are not likely to hear broached at a BIC meeting. Beyond that, Korgen and BIC’s board of directors, which consists of two lay persons and one clergy member from each BIC church, ponder a range of earthly topics.

**HOPE AMID BLIGHT**

Does Brockton really need a BIC?

It’s snowing. Your daughter is sick, and you need to make a run—fast—to the drugstore to get her medicine, then pick up some food at the store before the weather worsens. You live on the outskirts of downtown, in Brockton’s Walnut-Turner neighborhood, you don’t have a car, and it is a Sunday.

You’re fresh out of luck. This area of Brockton has not one drugstore, nor a bona fide grocery store. Most of the city’s buses do not run on Sundays and cab drivers are wary of visiting Walnut-Turner, a neighbor-

hood where open-air drug dealing is commonplace, especially at night. And until local activist Wayne Carter, of BIC and a local group called Reclaim Our Community, went out of his way to reassure business owners that the neighborhood was getting cleaner, Domino’s wouldn’t even deliver to Walnut-Turner.

For eight years, Carter lived in a white house at the corner of Turner Street. One afternoon, he gave me a tour in his blue Toyota pickup.

It is neighborhoods like Walnut-Turner that have saddled Brockton with a reputation for criminal activity and social decay. Boarded-up buildings buttress residential homes. On almost every block there are at least two or three homes, carcasses really, that have been ceded to drugs and squatters. While these are nestled in the midst of rows of occupied houses, the exteriors make it difficult to imagine anyone ever living here: punched in doors that were once nailed shut; graffiti adorning the rotted wood frames (quick to kindle, as arsonists have learned); and patches of grass that used to pass as a front lawn which have become a garbage dump. In one such pile, a child’s doll peeks out from beneath the weather-mottled remnants of a former couch. Oblivious, a young man shimmies up the side of an abandoned house to stash drugs behind a pocket in the wood sheathing a window.

“Part of the problem with boarding up houses and letting them sit is that nobody is going to ‘raise Cain’ if you have somebody sitting in front of it,” Carter says. While the city has begun to tear down these properties in recent years, quite a number remain.

Active in Brockton’s community policing program, Carter used to walk the streets of Walnut-Turner when he lived there. He helped to organize neighborhood support for the program, and put pressure on the police to step up their efforts against area drug dealers. But the neighborhood, he says, still has a long way to go. BIC has been “an organizing force” on these issues Carter says, “but overall, Brockton hasn’t accepted change yet.”

Carter says he has plans to run for city council in a couple of years, although it may be an uphill battle: The city has never elected an African American before. Worried his lack of a college degree might hurt his chances, he’s also thinking about night classes.

Meanwhile, Carter is busy in the community. The proprietor of “Community Furniture,” a small store that sells mostly used goods; he delivers food to the elderly who are cooched in Brockton’s high-rises; and from an oversized chair at the front of his store, the ordained deacon counsels those in distress. BIC, he reminds me—in between choice bits of scripture—has been a tool for those who refuse to give up.

“You have people who believe they can make a change in the world,” Carter says. “We put our religions aside and put our faith together.”

SPRING 1996 CommonWealth 60
**Why Blacks Are Losing Ground**

**Black Wealth / White Wealth**
A New Perspective on Racial Inequality
By Melvin L. Oliver & Thomas M. Shapiro
Routledge, 242 pages, Price $22.95

REVIEWED BY JACK BEATTY

“To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardship.”
—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Suppose the four million freed black slaves had been granted the “forty acres and a mule” they had been led to expect would be granted them from confiscated Confederate property. Suppose the Southern Homestead Act of 1866 had been to blacks what the 1862 Homestead Act, which applied only to non-Confederate whites, was to whites. What difference would that have made in the life-chances of African-Americans? The failure of Reconstruction is often discussed in terms of the abridgment of political rights for African-Americans. Today, with equal political rights a fact of law and life, that wrong has been righted. But the economic failure of Reconstruction remains as a living legacy.

Two-parent, two-paycheck black families have dramatically closed the racial income gap, and this rise of a black middle class equal in rights and increasingly equal in income with whites is a testament to the transformative effect of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Remove the legal barriers impeding black participation in American society and in the American economy and, so went the promise of the Second Reconstruction, blacks would prove themselves equal to whites in achievement. They have. That promise has largely been vindicated—again, for intact two-earner black families.

But one legacy of the First Reconstruction that the Second Reconstruction was unable to undo continues to limit the life-chances of black Americans. That is the racial gap not in income, but in wealth. This gap is wide, and it will grow wider when the biggest transfer of wealth in history begins early in the next century. An estimated $7 trillion worth of assets will soon be passed on to baby boomers. Because their parents were held back by law, prejudice and terror, black baby boomers can expect to receive little of this bonanza. Thus, even the best-educated upper middle-class blacks will transit the millennium further behind similarly situated whites than they have ever been before in their upwardly mobile lives.

The black middle classes live in a kind of parenthesis of history between the civil rights liberation and the coming inter-generational transfer of wealth. It is possible to work hard and play by the rules and still not get ahead in America, as successful blacks are about to discover.

The “wealth gap” between the races is the subject of this path-breaking work of social science. The authors (Melvin L. Oliver, a Professor of Sociology and Policy Studies at UCLA; and Thomas M. Shapiro, an Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Northeastern) write that, “The social distribution of wealth discloses a fresh and formidable dimension of racial inequality.” Using a wealth of census and other data about wealth (and subjecting it to sophisticated numerical analysis) the authors do that rare thing in race studies—say something new.

Wealth is not what one earns, though earnings can certainly create it. For example, my earnings pay the mortgage on my house, which, for me as for most readers, is all the wealth I possess or am ever likely to possess—my and my wife’s parents having left us with a rich moral, but no material, inheritance. Inherited wealth matters more in American society than it ever has before. One study the authors cite found that whereas 39 percent of the wealthiest men in America in 1900 came from the upper classes, 82 percent of the wealthiest came from the wealthiest class in 1970. The percentage is probably greater today, thanks to more favorable inheritance taxes and to the stock market boom of the last 25 years. Wealth is the new face of inequality—and not only as between blacks and whites, but as between middle-class whites born to working-class families and those born to middle-class or professional families.

The authors do not make enough of the intra-white dimension of wealth inequality, in my view. But, then, their focus is on race, not class. Their documentation of the racial gap in wealth is exhaustive—and alarming:

—12 percent of the population, blacks control only 1.3 percent of the nation’s financial assets; whites, 82 percent of the population, control 95 percent of net financial assets;

—two-earner black families earn 75 cents for every dollar earned by white families, but possess only 19 cents of financial assets for every dollar whites possess of such assets;

—blacks earning from $25,000 to $50,000 have an average net worth of $15,250; whites of the same income have an average net worth of $44,069;

—black net financial assets in the same income group average an amazing $290; whites, $6,988;

—only 27 percent of black middle-class households have enough assets to sustain their living standard for one month (median middle-class income is $2,750 a month) without income; 65 percent of white households could last a month. At the poverty level ($968 a month) most blacks, with only $250 in net assets, could, again, not last a month; whites could survive at that level for a year;

—63 percent of black households have zero or negative net assets versus 28 percent of white households;

As these figures dramatize, black middle-class progress is precarious and dependent on two paychecks. It can
vanish in a week.

What’s to be done? The authors are better at diagnosis than at prescription, though in truth it is hard to come up with politically imaginable remedies for the problem they have documented. Higher inheritance taxes, an income limit on the home mortgage interest deduction, an increase in the capital gains tax—these would nip at the margins.

A wealth tax would be a logical step toward narrowing the wealth gap. A progressive party, or a Democratic Party freed of its PAC and corporate soft money addictions, could prosper politically by advocating a wealth tax in lieu of the income tax—or most of it. Under a wealth tax, even high-earners would take home bigger checks.

The link between work and reward would be strengthened if wealth not work were taxed. The middle class, black and white, could save more or invest more in their children. Higher rates of saving and of human capital investment would compensate for the loss of economic dynamism caused by higher taxes on coupon-clippers and holders of inherited wealth.

Blacks would benefit disproportionately from a tax system centered on wealth not income, because they have so little wealth to tax. But they would not be the only ones to benefit. So would the asset-lean white middle class. With real wages frozen for most working Americans and likely to stay frozen for some time, a radical cut in taxes is the only remaining way for the two-earner middle class to improve its standard of living, at least in the short run. Long-run prospects for income gains would be hurt by cutting the total tax burden—schools would suffer, public investment in wealth-enhancing infrastructure would not be made. The tax burden, instead, should be shifted from earned income to unearned income and from the living to the dead—in short, to wealth.

Will this happen? Wall Street would be the big loser in a move to a wealth tax, and under current law it can buy a wealth tax off the political agenda. So the first step in making it happen is campaign finance reform. ■

Jack Beatty is a senior editor at The Atlantic Monthly.

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**THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION**

**Political Religion**

By Rev. Charles Stith

Abingdon Press, 155 pages, Price $10.95 (paperback)

**REVIEWED BY ZACHARY R. DOWDY**

To the Reverend Charles Stith, the Boston-based Methodist minister known for his work on behalf of the poor and the downtrodden, religious beliefs are among the best reasons for political involvement.

"From my vantage point, being religious means being political; that one’s politics reflects one’s religion is not an option, but an obligation," Stith writes, in *Political Religion*, his slim but provocative meditation on what might be called "the liberal faith."

"This book is about how the church should be the purveyor of the 'politics of inclusion, justice and equality,'" Stith writes.

His analysis, cogently written, clear and pragmatic, is rooted in the rhythms of today’s political climate, punctuated by an examination of the Rev. Jesse Jackson’s and Rev. Pat Robertson’s 1988 forays into the political fray. The book’s early chapters perhaps rely too heavily on anecdotes to show how politics and religion have merged over the years, but in the latter chapters, Stith makes his strongest case, moving beyond themqtt question of "whether" religion and politics should mix, to arguing "how" they should be intertwined.

The self-described liberal compares the presidential campaigns of Jackson, a "Christian populist," and Robertson, a "Christian pietist" and finds, not surprisingly, Jackson’s religiously colored liberal bent better suited within a political framework.

"The difference between these two pastors can be summed up in their different religious testimonies and political agendas," Stith writes in the chapter titled Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson: Preachers and Politics. "Their mixing of theology and politics is such that in one we have a clear-cut conservative, whose brand of conservatism results in the politics of pietism reflective of the apostle Paul. In the other, we have a progressive whose politics are populist in the tradition of the prophets and the gospel."

Much of Stith’s 155-page argument is buttressed by rich anecdotes from Biblical parables and the history of African-Americans dating back to the days of Reconstruction, after the nation’s slaves were emancipated.

It does not provide a detailed, systematic approach to counter the country’s conservative shift, but it does provide a general discussion of approaches that hold promise.

He draws the best example of the influence of the church in political life from the events and characters of the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and 1960s, although the book fails to discuss specific strategies that might better apply in the current era.

Stith hopes the book serves as a clarion call to action for the socially conservative—but politically liberal—black church to enter the political fray with a deeper commitment, registering and educating voters, lobbying, and endorsing candidates like never before.

Black congregations have long been identified with the moral imperatives touted by the religious right, but the black church has also pushed government intervention, and the delivery of key social services, as morally right things to do.

Stith’s argument is a weapon in
defense of traditional liberal activism. It suggests operating within the realm of tried strategic initiatives without discussing truly radical tactics to break the conservative stronghold on the national agenda.

Political Religion comes as the well-organized members of the religious right, such as the Christian Coalition, marshal forces to dismantle public policy measures it believes are immoral, expensive, or overly generous—but which liberals defend as the fibers of a much-needed, if well-worn safety net.

The chasm in religious approaches is manifest in campaign strategies of the pastors who squared off in 1988, both of whom drew wide support from masses of believers moved by evangelists who seemed to promise vasty differing brands of deliverance.

Stamping out racism and exploitation in this country and abroad is the crux of Jackson's political motivations, whereas Robertson ran for office to take aim at moral decay, the decline and marginalization of the country's decidedly Christian moorings, Stith says. Noting Robertson's criticism of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs, coupled with Robertson's praise of Ronald Reagan, Stith concludes conservative views such as these give rise to agendas bereft of "social justice" components.

"Robertson's personal story, and his understanding of history, says everything about his idea of how we resolve the contemporary political problematic. The solution," according to Robertson, "lies in less government, state's rights, and more individual integrity."

Like most people on the left, Stith champions the causes of abortion rights, equality for gay and lesbians, and favors creative, less restrictive alternatives to the conservative drive to mandate prayer in public schools.

Liberals may find Stith's argument compelling for its raw assessment of conservative rhetoric. But what traditional liberalism needs now is a new claim on the nation's consciousness, a plan to regain the national empathy that helped produce the Great Society. Stith's prophecy that conservative forces will ultimately fail in their effort to seize political power may hearten liberals, too, although he gives little evidence for the impending halt of the conservative march, beyond his own wishful thinking.

Stith operates from the premise that conservative policies are ultimately too narrow and uncompromising, traits that he says tend to run counter to democratic ideals and therefore cannot survive in a pluralistic climate.

"The religious right must fail because the movement violates the fundamental principle of political participation by the church; that is, that the proper mix of politics and religion should be directed toward the perfection of democracy," he writes.

In the absence of a historical precedent, and in the face of a conservative movement whose momentum continues apace, Stith's prophecy rings hollow. It also fails to consider other components of this democratic system, such as the federal and Supreme courts, which exercise considerable control over the political climate in the nation.

Free speech, abortion rights, privacy, rights within the penal system—hot-button issues that can ignite a political bonfire—have all been contested in the nation's courts. The legacy of Reagan, who packed the Supreme Court and federal courts with ideological soulmates, is being seen as judicial decisions reflect right-wing agendas. It remains to be seen whether the conservative tide dries up before washing away the liberal patina still glowing on measures that enshrined individual rights in these crucial areas.

The year 1995 alone saw more prisoners executed than any year in the past several decades. It may be that religious arguments or a role for religion are needed in a climate that has become downright hostile to liberal thinking. In this regard, the value of Stith's treatise rises, for who better can make the moral case for clemency and compassion—even rehabilitation—than the faith community?

Stith takes pains to point out that the church must resist the seductive pull of politics for fear of becoming drunk with power. He warns against the "sanctification" of power, asking: "How do we operate in the political world without becoming of the political world?"

Nonetheless, his polemic pushes for a larger role in the political arena: "First, given the success of the Civil Rights Movement in opening up the body politic, the church's role in politics can (and must) extend beyond protests and pickets to policy and programs."

Stith's analysis may rely too heavily on the anecdotal evidence of progress as shown by the civil rights movement. And it falls short in really coming to grips with the popular and effective conservative movement in the form of the Christian Coalition. Nonetheless, the book may serve to inspire, if not anger.

It offers liberals and progressives hope in providing examples of how to defeat the right, from evidence showing conservative candidates tend to lose when high percentages of the electorate come to the polls, to advising the faith community to find common denominators linking the interests of a broad spectrum of people.

Social justice issues still resonate equally among blacks, Latinos, Asians, women, gay and lesbians, for example, and, Stith says, these issues should be the glue that forms a formidable bloc.

"When these groups are added together, a fairly broad cross section of people results, representing a significant political force," he writes.

Significantly, Stith encourages liberal activists to tap into the political potential the churches carry since they are politically independent and may be the single most direct route to large numbers of black people.

Stith reviews a number of tested strategies and offers a few novel approaches to check the conservative advance and revive a sagging liberal doctrine.

Zachary Dowdy is a staff writer at The Boston Globe.
some years before his death, the writer Bernard Malamud was asked why he felt it was important to write fiction—to write, that is, in an age that had so little apparent use for it. Malamud stuttered, grew diffident, and gave a surprisingly defensive answer. Reading the interview, I remember scratching my head: How was it that even a writer of Bernard Malamud’s eminence could have such difficulty answering that question?

Years later, I came upon a passage from Henry James that settled the matter for me. The passage is a brief description of Beacon Street, in Boston, in the late 19th century, that appears in a minor James story called “A New England Winter.” Florimund Daintry, a pretentious young painter with what James refers to as “a great deal of eye,” is walking from Newbury Street to his aunt’s, on Mount Vernon Place. It is a cold winter morning, and Florimund stops to notice “the large clear windows,” about which there is something “almost terrible.” “Florimund had forgotten how vast and clean they were, and how, in their sculptured frames, the New England air seemed, like a jealous housewife, to polish and preserve them. A great many ladies were looking out, and groups of children, in the drawing rooms, were flattening their noses against the transparent plate. Here and there, behind it, the back of a statuette or the symmetry of a painted vase, erect on a pedestal, presented itself to the street, and enabled the passer to construct, more or less, the room within...”

The passage goes on to describe snow and cornices and everything you might want to know about a street in winter, but what I particularly like about it is that phrase, “A great many ladies were looking out, and groups of children.” The first time I read the passage, I remember feeling a kind of reader’s ecstasy. For a moment, I was simply there, a hundred years in the past, seeing those faces, and watching them, too, recede into their individual mysteries. It has stayed with me, haunted me, really, and one of the things I have wanted to do for some time was to trace Florimund Daintry’s path, and see what the street looks like in another winter.

On a recent pre-Christmas Tuesday morning, I took the opportunity. I brought as companion my 15-year-old daughter, a sophomore in the public high school in Northampton. She didn’t know it, but I had brought her along not simply for her company, but so that I could deliver a lecture. I suspect that, like many public school students in this country, she is being taught literature in a way I find somewhat bothersome. Taught, for instance, that the ultimate value of a work of fiction lies in its ability to accelerate social progress, or to give “voice” to a previously oppressed group. I want to share with her today, by means of this favorite passage, and this walk, my own sense of the value of fiction. In the car, though, on the way into...
Boston, she takes the wind out of my sails.

“They don’t teach that,” she says, when I offer my speculations as to what might be going on in her English classroom. “And anyway, that’s not why I read. I read because I want to see how someone else thinks.”

With no lecture for me to give then, we find ourselves simply walking. Beacon Street today probably does not look a whole lot different than it did in Henry James’s time. The gas lamps have gone electric, and one’s eye is directed to the bar immortalized by “Cheers,” but those brick and stone façades have been miraculously preserved. There is, though, a layer that has been added to Beacon Street since Florimund Daintry walked it. It is a commemorative layer, a kind of wax laid thick on the city of Boston. What my daughter and I are looking at has become “history,” and we are reminded perhaps too often of that fact.

On Tremont Street, where our walk ends, the Granary Burial Ground houses the remains of Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams. My daughter has not much interest in seeing those graves. Nor is she much impressed by the commemorative bust of John Singleton Copley in front of his house on Beacon Street.

As luck or coincidence would have it, we have recently been to New York, where we saw an exhibition of Copley’s paintings at the Metropolitan: the old Bostonians captured for posterity in their elaborate waistcoats, in formal poses. It reminded me of the way we are invited, all the time, to consider History as a remote place, strange, around which it’s difficult, sometimes, not to feel like a 15-year-old: as though history is something you want to make fun of.

So as we stand in the cold on Beacon Street, I am glad to have a simple passage from Henry James to put aside the official, and off-putting, stately, the endless plaques and announcements of what once went on here, and why it’s important. I try to communicate what I’m feeling to my daughter, who nods and accepts it, but is mostly cold and wants to go back to the car. She’s 15, after all; it’s going to take time before she knows what I know, and comes to care about it as much. At 45, I am increasingly aware that wars generally get covered pretty well, as do economics and the ascension of second vice presidents, in our newspapers and journals. The public side of life is rarely in danger of getting lost. But those ladies and groups of children, they’re dead now, and unremarked, except that one day, 100 years ago, Henry James took notice of them. It is from that simple notice, that careful recreation of their unimportant lives, that history draws its breath.

Anthony Giardina is a writer living in Florence, Mass. His collection of stories, The Country of Marriage, will be published by Doubleday next year.
TAKE BACK THE

TURNPRIKE

By David Tyler

The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority is holding thousands of commuters hostage.
If you live outside Route 128, you pay between $500 and $1,000 for the privilege of driving back and forth to Boston every day.
You can’t control this tax and you can’t even vote on those who run this quasi-public authority.
The Turnpike Authority runs an exquisitely paved 135-mile express road from Boston to the New York state line. The road is lovingly maintained and has an excellent safety record. But it is also a case study in the most profligate method to maintain a highway.
Although it is more than 40 years old, the authority represents a dangerous trend in public policy: the delivery of public services by quasi-governmental bodies that have little accountability to the voters. The authority has a monopoly on its service. And with no check on its spending by the Legislature or voters, there is no incentive to spend that money wisely or efficiently.
If anything, the incentive is for the authority to keep growing and to perpetuate itself. With guaranteed annual revenues of $150.2 million ($135.3 of that from tolls) it practically has a license to print money.
So the Turnpike Authority keeps getting bigger and bigger. From 1982 to 1987, spending increased 46.1 percent; from 1987 to 1992, spending increased 66 percent.
It employs 1,494 people: 554 toll collectors, about 400 maintenance workers, and 110 state police officers.
To understand how outrageously bloated that is, compare it to the Massachusetts Highway Department, which maintains almost 3,200 miles of roads. In fiscal 1996 it runs these roads with 2,300 employees and an operating budget of $73.2 million.
The Turnpike Authority spends the same amount of money to take care of a mere 135 miles of roads: Its operating budget for fiscal 1994 was $70.3 million. In an October 1991 report, the state Inspector General calculated that in one year the authority spent 64 percent more per lane mile for maintenance than the state highway department spent maintaining interstate roads, even after the costs of collecting tolls and paying for the state police were dropped.
The Turnpike Authority is a legendary patronage haven. Most of its current top officials worked for former Gov. Michael Dukakis. Chairman Alan R. McKinnon was his deputy transportation secretary; John Judge, the Turnpike’s director of operations, was deputy director of Dukakis’s Office of Economic Development; General Counsel James Aloisi worked in the Office of Transportation.
Authorities do have a function: to build major public works projects which must be insulated from the ordinary political process in order to be finished. When the project is done, the authority should be abolished, unless a compelling case can be made that no one else can do its job.
The Turnpike Authority finished the road in 1965. The original bonds were paid off in 1983. At that point, the Mass Pike should have been given back to the state. The authority could have remained to run the airport tunnels.
Yet in March 1993, the authority issued $365 million in new bonds for a massive, $500 million rebuilding program. No one questions the need to rebuild a 40-year-old road. But these bonds all-too-conveniently extended the life of the authority into the next century.
Last year, former Turnpike foe Gov. William Weld and the state Legislature gave the authority control of the new third harbor tunnel, increasing its political power all the more.
In December, a grass-roots group, Free the Pike, unsuccessfully tried to place a question on the 1996 ballot that would have given voters a chance to eliminate the tolls.
First, Turnpike officials warned voters that if the authority were eliminated, it would cause a 5 cent increase in the gas tax. Then they went to court to block the question from even getting on the ballot, spending $20,000 in toll revenues on that fight.
General Counsel Aloisi implied that voters couldn’t decide such a complex issue through the democratic process. “Important public policy questions such as what you should do with a $150 million revenue stream, I don’t think should be made on the basis of who has the best talk radio sound bites,” he said.
There is a larger question here. If the Turnpike is used as a role model for the national trend of contracting out services that used to be performed by state and federal governments, we need to ask: Is this the best way to perform these services? The authority’s history of waste and overspending clearly shows there are better ways to run a highway.
The federal government is making it easier to put up toll roads. Will our solution to other highway problems be to put up toll booths on Route 495 or Route 93, and create more bureaucracies to run these roads?
We are in danger of fragmenting government into separate fiefdoms that provide services only to those who can pay a fee, instead of a government that strives to provide services for all citizens, fairly and equitably.

David Tyler is editorial page editor for The Tab Community Newspapers.

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Making a case for eliminating the Turnpike Authority isn’t that hard. Making a case for eliminating tolls is another matter.

Turnpike tolls help make Massachusetts a better place to live. In the last quarter century, traffic volumes here have doubled—not as a result of population growth, which has been modest, but due to explosive growth in the number of miles each person drives. The result has been more noise, more streets rebuilt to look like expressways, and more acid rain, soot, smog, and water pollution than there would be if we didn’t drive so much. And traffic volumes keep growing.

A major reason for the traffic boom has been that public subsidies make driving artificially cheap. Gas taxes, tolls, and fees paid by drivers cover less than two-thirds of government spending on roads. About half of government spending on roads goes not to construction but to maintenance, to police, fire, and court services needed to enforce traffic laws and deal with accidents, and to health-care services necessitated by automobile accidents and pollution. The typical driver commuting into Boston enjoys a government subsidy that’s 43 percent larger than the subsidy for his or her neighbor’s commute on an MBTA train. And the share of total state revenues that comes from gas taxes and driver’s license and motor vehicle registration fees is smaller in Massachusetts than in all but seven other states.

The case for “freeing the pike” from tolls is about as strong as the case for freeing the MBTA from fares. Why aren’t the Turnpike’s would-be liberators trying to “free the T”? Because they’re applying a double standard. They say roads should be supported by general tax revenues, but think transit should be supported by those who use it. Transit can’t compete on those terms.

The “free the roads” approach has proven to be its own undoing. With tollbooths and good mass transit in equally short supply, the roads have become so badly congested that more and more people see just one solution: congestion pricing, meaning tolls that go up when traffic is heavy and down when it’s light. Conservative think tanks, environmentalists, the Federal Highway Administration, and Globe columnist Jeff Jacoby all back congestion pricing. They’ve seen that when no one pays, the roads become gridlocked, and the environment and our communities suffer, too.

Maybe the Turnpike Authority should go. But Turnpike tolls should definitely stay.

Stephen H. Barrington is a senior attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation in Boston.
By James Aloisi

Myths about the MassPike

The variety of myths that surround the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, because of the persistent misperceptions they leave, cloud the ability to have a reasoned debate. This is unfortunate, for what is at issue is whether Massachusetts will sacrifice a completely off-budget transportation revenue stream on the altar of anti-government sentiment.

There is the myth of the “sunset provision”—the belief that the law required MassPike to go out of business when the original construction bonds were paid off. MassPike’s history belies this myth. The legislature has consistently expanded the purview of the Turnpike Authority, by granting it the right to issue additional turnpike bonds, by requiring it to purchase the Sumner Tunnel and build the Callahan Tunnel, and most recently to authorize it to own and operate the third harbor tunnel in Boston. MassPike stays in business because every legislature and governor since 1952 have wanted it to, and because it provides the Commonwealth with the off-budget revenue generation necessary to accomplish some of the state’s larger and most essential transportation infrastructure goals.

Then there is the myth of profligacy—the idea that MassPike spending is unnecessary or out of control. This one is difficult to address, because there is no fair or fully accurate way to compare MassPike costs with Massachusetts Highway Department costs. For example, MassPike pays the full cost of its state police troop. MHD does not. MassPike does its own snow removal. MHD does not. MassPike’s budget includes costs associated with tourism promotion, including substantial costs previously borne by the Commonwealth.

MHD has no such costs. For purposes of this debate, though, let us agree that MassPike’s costs are larger than MHD’s. What is the essential difference? The difference is quality. MassPike has 260 bridges on or over the turnpike. None are weight restricted. The state has hundreds of bridges that cannot carry the weight they were designed to carry. MassPike’s road conditions during winter’s inclement weather is the stuff of legend; MHD’s snow and ice removal program is the stuff of nightmares. This is not meant to criticize the underfunded MHD, but to point out that MassPike provides a higher quality transportation product—a product necessary to maintain the state’s only east/west interstate highway.

Strip away the myths, and the facts reveal that MassPike is an important and sensible agency, run by sensible and public-spirited people, performing sensible and necessary tasks.

James Aloisi is General Counsel of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.
A QUIZ FOR CANDIDATES

By Christopher Daly

In this year’s Senate race, Massachusetts voters are confronted with a choice:

The Democratic Party offers a privileged white male in his early 50s who comes from a wealthy family that traces its roots to 17th-century America, who went to Yale and married a woman whose name is a household word.

The Republican Party, by contrast, offers a privileged white male in his early 50s who comes from a wealthy family that traces its roots to 17th-century America, who went to Harvard and married a woman whose name is a household word.

Both men enjoy a high, steady income, generous health and retirement plans, and a staff that handles just about every practical problem that arises at work, at home, or in between.

As voters, we have no evidence that either man has any recent, authentic experience with what we know as life itself. We know their views on the issues, but we do not know what would happen if we tried to borrow $10 from either man.

So, who is better qualified to represent us in the coming battles over spending, taxes and middle-class entitlements? How is a voter to decide?

As a public service, we offer a quiz. We hope that in the interest of full disclosure, each candidate will give it his best shot, without calling on staff. Ready, gentlemen?

Write your answers in the space available. Keep your eyes on your own work. If you’re not sure of an answer, don’t guess. You may begin.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:

1. What is the price of a gallon of milk? (To the nearest dime). __________

2. What is your monthly nut? (Mortgage/rent, utilities, food. To the nearest hundred.) __________

3. What is the Daily Double? __________
   (Bonus question: Have you ever won one?) Yes/No

4. What is the price of a cheap seat at a Bruins game? __________

5. What was it 10 years ago? __________

6. You are waiting for a T train at the Malden Center stop. A guy comes up to you and asks how to get to Mattapan Square. What do you say?

7. What happens if you fall two months behind on the cable TV bill? The electric bill?


9. What night is trash night in your neighborhood?
   (Bonus question: Does your local recycling program accept all types of plastic at curbside, or do you have to sort them?)

10. It’s 6:00 p.m. The kids are hungry. Your wife just called to say she can’t get home until. Make dinner. (Don’t really make it; just tell us how you would.)

11. The kids want rollerblades. How much would it cost to provide a new pair for each child?

MUTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Which is the cheapest way to feed a family of five?
   A. Kraft macaroni and cheese.
   B. Five Happy Meals at Mickey D’s.
   C. The big bucket from the Colonel.
   D. None of the above.

2. The car won’t start. Should you:
   A. Take the T?
   B. Ask the guy next door to look at it?
   C. Jumpstart it?
   D. Buy a new one?

3. You get a call from your child’s school saying your child has head lice and must be picked up immediately and brought home. Do you:
   A. Drop everything, go to school and spend the rest of the day trying ineffective shampoos before settling down to pick nits from each strand of hair, then top off your day by washing all the clothes and vacuuming the whole house?
   B. Call your wife and make something up about what an important day you’re having and ask her to go to school?
   C. Wish you knew your neighbors better so you could ask one of them?
   D. File a bill to ban head lice?

ESSAY QUESTION:

Your wife comes to you and says you’re never home.
You’re always out driving around. She says she is working hard, too, but she always ends up having to do it all—run the household, think about the kids, plan the meals, the whole bit. What do you say?
(Extra credit: She brings up sex, too.)

When you are finished, note your elapsed time and enter it here ______. Fold your answer sheet and mail it to Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ.

Christopher Daly is a writer and teacher who lives near Boston.
Have you gotten your copy of the report everyone’s talking about?

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