

Century Marks

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Tab, The Calgary Sun.

Keeping faith with seniors: One mark of a good society, according to communitarian Amatai Etzioni, is that it takes care of its elderly people. The Social Security program in the U.S. has served like a covenant between the generations. “To deny or significantly dilute these commitments evokes the same sense of unfairness and injustice we experience upon hearing that an insurance company has canceled its policies when its policy-holders became sick or when they retroactively and unilaterally change the terms of the policy.” It is not as though the U.S. has been unusually generous in its commitments to the elderly: the United Kingdom commits nearly 18 percent of its GDP to care for the elderly, while the U.S. commits just 12 percent. The U.S. has the highest rate of elder poverty among the most developed nations (*American Scholar*, Spring).

Faith-based economics: A “faith-based economy,” argues Frederick H. Borsch, is based not so much on a “preferential option for the poor” as on a concern for the

well-being of the whole community in which no one is left behind or left out or deprived of dignity. Such an approach should be inspired by Franklin Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address, in which he said: "The test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." Although this is a goal that can never be achieved, it should not be surrendered on account of that, says Borsch (*Anglican Theological Review*, Winter).

If I can do it: In reviewing Richard Parker's biography of John Kenneth Galbraith (*Foreign Affairs*, May/June), J. Bradford DeLong wonders why Galbraith—one of the most formidable economists and social thinkers of the 20th century—is out of favor now. DeLong thinks it is because of the enduring American myth of rugged individualism. Given the strength of that myth, the U.S. will never be open to a European-style social democracy. "People come together for barn raisings," says DeLong, "but America is still the land of upward mobility and opportunity, where the most common questions are, I've done it, so why haven't you? and Doesn't this social solidarity stuff mean that I've got to pull more than my share of the weight?"

More on economics: Ted Haggard, pastor of the New Life megachurch in Colorado Springs and president of the National Association of Evangelicals, believes that globalization is a vehicle for the spread of Christianity (*Harper's*, May). Next to the Bible for Haggard is *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman's analysis of the global economy. Haggard claims that it was pro-capitalist, evangelical Christians who led the Ukraine toward an open-market economy, and that in the past dozen years the number of evangelicals in the Ukraine has grown more than tenfold. The evangelicals in the Ukraine are "pro-free markets, they're pro-private property. That's what evangelical stands for," says Haggard. Now we know.

Philosophy as ballast: The protest by some faculty, students and alumni of President Bush's appearance at Calvin College's commencement was seen by some as a struggle for the identity and soul of the college (see p. 17). At stake is "the Dutch Reformed tradition that could combine theological orthodoxy with political progressivism," said one person with Calvin connections. But Harry Stout, history professor at Yale University and a Calvin alumnus, believes the "Reformed World and Life View" is still intact at Calvin, and that its students choose Calvin largely for its distinctive philosophy. "And I do mean 'philosophy,'" says Stout. "Over the years, the one constant at Calvin has been an extraordinary philosophy department that continues to be, in medieval terms, 'queen of the sciences.' Calvin's philosophy

department has no equal at any Protestant Christian school that I am aware of, and its influence runs deep. Evangelicals can't budge it any more than liberals can budge it. And as long as philosophy cannot be budged, Calvin's identity will remain firmly planted as it always has been, distinct from virtually all other institutions of higher learning."

What's Darfur there for? The bipartisan Darfur Accountability Act was easily passed by the U.S. Senate, but the White House is asking Congress to strike it from the \$82 billion supplemental bill for Iraq and Afghanistan. The act would authorize \$90 million of aid to African Union peacekeepers and humanitarian organizations, establish a no-fly zone over the region and make the issue of genocide the top priority in American relations with Sudan. The Sudanese government is holding out the prospect of forging increased intelligence ties with the U.S. in order to escape sanctions (*New Republic*, May 16).

Up the down staircase: Psychologist Fathali M. Moghaddam describes the development of a terrorist by using an analogy to a staircase in a six-floor building. Terrorists in the making move from feelings of unfairness and deprivation (ground floor) to the search for ways to improve the social conditions (first floor) to being influenced by leaders to project their anger onto an "enemy" (second floor). From there they begin to see terrorism as a justified strategy (third floor) and become ripe for recruitment into a terrorist organization (fourth floor). Finally, specific individuals are trained to carry out terrorist attacks. The problem with antiterrorist strategies in the West is that they tend to focus on destroying the top leaders of terrorist organizations and preventing acts of terrorism—the last floor in this staircase analogy. Long-term strategies must deal with the conditions that encourage people to climb the staircase (*American Psychologist*, February-March).

Creationism coming unglued: In response to protests from creationists, in 2002 the Cobb County Schools in Georgia placed stickers in science books which read: "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered." But this past January a federal judge said that stickers are an unconstitutional endorsement of religion. So the county is removing the stickers one by one, using putty knives and an adhesive remover (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 24).

Warning—this stinks: In apparent response to reports that American guards at Guantánamo Bay had flushed a Qur'an down a toilet, the Danieltown Baptist Church

in North Carolina posted a sign which reads: "The Koran Needs to Be Flushed!" The pastor acknowledged that the sign was controversial but defended it, saying, "We just have to stand up for what's right." The pastor eventually removed the sign, explaining that he didn't realize how highly Muslims regarded the Qur'an. (www.thedigitalcourier.com).