

[Chapter XIX is an arbitrary collection of policy suggestions that lacks coherence and dishonours the proud word “chapter.” An editorial decision was made to cut the chapter to benefit the flow of the work but more importantly to raise the overall quality of the manuscript. This had nothing to do with the cost of producing this manuscript, and any suggestion to the contrary will be taken as a personal affront to my reputation. - Robert Von Stricker-Beresford]

Chapter XIX

Rules & Regulations

The Polemic

“[C]ompromise, not as a mediocre way to do politics, but as the only way to do democratic politics, is itself an adventure. It lacks the panache of revolutionary violence. It might not stir the blood in the way a “non-negotiable demand” does. But it presages a livable future.” - Elshtain

“Politics is about getting things done when people do not agree.” - Geuss

“Reconciliation and willingness to compromise without cowardice, without opportunism, and without conceding what one considers the heart of the matter – that certainly is an art not given freely to anybody as a natural gift. But the fate of the democratic order of the world depends on our ability to master this art.” - Kolakowski

According to both Burke and Neibuhr, and according to common sense, regulations in a society should be practical (they should actually achieve something concrete rather than aim at an ideal), and they must be reformable. We shouldn't put forward a series of regulations that we can never change. Things change. And we can't foresee what will happen. Bearing that in mind, this chapter consists wholly in miscellaneous suggestions that didn't fit anywhere else in the book. The idea is that, if I am arrogant enough to suggest I know what the better form of government is, and I am arrogant enough to design a plan for a new Canada, I certainly should be arrogant enough to tell government what to do once they've implemented my framework. I mean, it's only consistent that I follow through to the end, right? I have made this alphabetical as I see no other reasonable way to proceed.

Affirmative action.

A private firm shouldn't be *forced* to hire a certain number of members of groups (races, sexes, species)

to fill a quota, and the government certainly shouldn't hire employees on this basis. However, there is no reason to prevent/disallow group membership to influence the individual hiring process (i.e., we could use another woman in the office, or, well, he's black so he's been disadvantaged so maybe we'll forgive some hiring criteria he hasn't met). Government imposed quotas increase the power of the government, often in unexpected ways. But they also amplify difference, which is unnecessary and possibly dangerous.¹ Publicly funded organizations are another matter, given that they are getting tax payers money, and we as a society should expect some degree of reflection in our publicly owned corporations and in our ministries. But for this problem of difference, the Ontario Human Rights Commission is a great example. They are power mad. They are deciding on cases of supposed “rights” such as whether or not a bar owner can kick out a marijuana smoker! Now, I think the marijuana smoker should be able to smoke weed anywhere in public, but for most people it is currently against the law. And certainly it should be up to the bar owner whether to let him in or not. How is it a matter of human rights between the weed-smoker and the bar owner? Where exactly does “right” come into it except that it's the bar owner's bar? More importantly, the bar owner didn't know where he stood legally, because he had yet to be put before the arbitrary decision of the Commission. That, my friends, is unconstitutional.²

Personally, I think certain things shouldn't be forced on the employer. Like if the employer doesn't want to hire me because I am white, or I stink, or whatever, then he or she should be allowed to not hire me. However, I realize that this has been abused to such a degree in the past in various societies that my personal preferences are probably inappropriate for our society. So perhaps the public should be able to curb the hiring and wage practices of private companies at least a little. That is to say, there should be mandatory work-place equality (to a certain extent) despite my reservations.

Age restrictions.

As much as young people may claim otherwise, there is a distinct difference between most fully

1 Are you paying attention you idiots who want more ethnic schools? Emphasizing difference amplifies difference.

2 Editor's note: This example is more than a little out of date

capable adults and children. Though there is no clear line or no clear age where children achieve adulthood, we must pick one anyway. In fact, many adults behave like children (I'm looking at You, Lukacsians), and many children behave like adults (I'm looking at you, child prodigies). I listen to twenty-somethings today and I think, there should be a law against them “coming 'round,”...I mean voting. What happened to maturity? In my day, people were mature beyond their years. Ahem. There is no way around drawing this line; I'm sorry. I think if we are going to pick a line, we should pick one, with one practical exception that will strike many as inconsistent (fuck'em!). The age to vote, run for office, legally consent to sexual intercourse, drink, smoke cigarettes, use drugs, be conscripted (only in defence of Canadian citizens) and whatever else we may include should be the same age for everyone. None of this “In Ontario I can vote but I can't drink” bullshit. Obviously, helping to decide the fate of our country is less important than handling our absinthe.³

What age should it be? How about sixteen years old? Why sixteen? Eighteen is too old. It may not strike people as too old, but I definitely believe it is. We need to gain the interest of the young while they are still in school and can still be reasonably compelled to pay attention to politics (through classes). Though many people are not mature enough to vote when they're 35, others are mature enough to do it at age 15 (or think they are). The worry is that the young are very easily convinced. Well, one way to combat that is to get off our asses and vote too. I know that if I had voted at age 16 I would have voted for a non-offensive party despite my own quasi-fascist stance. That makes me think that other kids might just vote Liberal or Conservative or NDP too, and not actually for who they like (just like everyone else). But then I think about how mature I was (and am), and I think most kids with similar views would have voted for the LLEBMP.⁴

As for drinking and those other things, this would be an “in public or purchasing” rule. Parents could (and should) introduce these things to their kids first (before other kids do, and certainly before the kid is legally allowed to buy the things). I was going to rant about the age for consensual sex, too.

³ If they don't make that stuff legal soon, I'm moving to the Republic of the Czechs.

⁴ Translator's Note: Let's Lynch Everyone But Me Party

But then the government went and changed it on me.⁵ And it is terribly reasonable, which surprises me a whole heck of a lot. What I was going to say was that two kids under a certain age limit enjoying themselves should be considered differently than one above that age and the other below. Our current law (in Ontario) has two things: an age limit with a corollary that people within four years can do it. That sounds about right to me. Sometimes governments actually make good decisions. Though I am surprised, I think this should all give us hope for the future.

Driving is the one exception to all this, I think. The Germans appear to have found a workable system. Driving can be considered a privilege rather than a right. It should be earned through a graduated system *after* people are allowed to drink and vote (especially vote!). They must learn responsibility for themselves in other areas before they can be allowed to freely operate a vehicle that can be more of a danger to others than something like the consumption of alcohol in a bar (unless you're anti-social).

Civil suits.

With regard to civil suits, it makes sense, based on experience, that judges should deal with them rather than juries. Juries tend to award ridiculous amounts of damages for nothing. That isn't to say a judge won't, so maybe it should be three judges, I don't know. And there should be an appeal process. And some kind of notion of “emotional damages” or whatever as not going beyond a certain amount related to the actual financial damages involved (150 per cent to pick a figure at random). That is to say, if I spilled hot coffee on myself – wow is that ever up to date – and spent a few bucks paying for creams for my burnt skin, then my emotional damages would be worth a few bucks plus another buck or something. Including legal fees as part of the damages could be dangerous. They should just be in addition: financial damages, emotional damages, and legal fees.

Conflicts of interest.

I don't think bureaucrats should be allowed to be married to politicians. Currently, ministers cannot

⁵ Thanks, Derek!

become lobbyists for five years after they have left politics. Democracy Watch suggests that the reverse should also be true: lobbyists, even though they may get elected, should not be allowed to be ministers for five years. They want the appearance of good faith, not just actual good faith (government must do more than be democratic, it must appear to be democratic, etc, etc). One suggestion of mine is that no elected official, and possibly even no appointed official above a certain level (excluding the appointed deputy ministers...or maybe that scheme is a problem: think about it!), should be allowed to have an input on a decision involving a company that they have worked for at some time. This could be problematic in many ways, it is Canada, after all, where everyone knows everyone and has served on the board of half the companies. It could be that ministers from other departments would then regularly be forced to be involved in other departments' matters, or the PM could get more responsibility or power because of this, and it would also be very difficult to prove that the relevant elected officials were not involved. But these are important things to think about, nonetheless. This is central in a democracy, because we can always expect our leaders to be doing things that benefit them and their friends, rather than us, the regular joes and joesses. Without very strict ethical guidelines, we get the same-old old boys network.

One of the goals of the democratic process is to try to reduce that old boys network, or rather to expand it, force it to include more people, many of whom are neither old nor boys. Nepotism will never disappear. It is human “nature” to prefer your kin and friends. But the least we can do is discourage it, obviously not in all circumstances, and we should always prevent it at the highest levels of government. Liberal-democracies cease to be liberal democracies when appointments are based solely on nepotism.

Corporate Welfare.

As I've noted before, we are constantly harassed by this myth that we could live in a free market, and that we should definitely live in such a system. Of course, such a system never existed. But a reasonable approximation in some areas is good for us, at least to an extent. But society exists to serve

us. That is the legitimization for the welfare state. But these welfare programs must only exist for real individuals. One of the reasons we don't have a "free market" is due to corporate subsidies/welfare. I know the argument for why they benefit the individuals in the end, especially in this so-called globalized world. But the governments don't lose money because of the costs of employment insurance; or helping the homeless or what have you. That's just something neo-cons feed us because we don't pay attention. Corporate welfare is a huge chunk of expenditures. Yet we rarely regard subsidies as "welfare."

Subsidies aren't always a bad thing. But we must make them conditional. We can probably give companies tax breaks, but they would have to do something (aside from staying put) to contribute to our society in return (I'm thinking primarily about cleaning up pollution and reclamation projects). Companies would have to make notable contributions to society (beyond just providing jobs) as a trade-off to get assistance from the government. This would have to be spelled out in strict legal guidelines. Another thought is some kind of regulatory body featuring elected officials whose jobs are simply to make sure these companies behave, like having a politician on a Board of Directors. It's simple: if companies want public money, they have to behave like citizens.

Crime etc.

As AI tells us, "In [the Greek] universe there were more mistakes than crimes, and the only definitive crime was excess. In a world entirely dominated by history, which ours threatens to become, there are no longer any mistakes, but only crimes, of which the greatest is moderation" (Camus 1991, 28). How do we make the culture less litigious? One thing would be to change the insurance standards we currently use. Criminals shouldn't be able to sue people when they have been hurt due to a criminal act. Maybe the insurance companies would hate this idea but they make enough money as it is. We don't need to make them happy. Though our culture is nowhere near as messed up as Our Neighbor's, we still sue more than we have to. The first remedy to this is to make convicted criminals unable to sue victims for any kind of damages. Accused criminals would have to wait until they are acquitted before

they could sue. Otherwise we get burglars suing because they got bit by a dog during a robbery, and that kind of nonsense. If this bothers insurance companies, then insurance regulations need to be changed.

The other thing is that there must be Statutes of Limitations on *everything*; on crimes committed by individuals against individuals, but especially on crimes supposedly committed by groups against groups. One group should not be able to demand that another group be punished for some damages in the past. Criminal acts are performed by individuals. If the individuals die, then there is no one left to prosecute. Yes, systems abet individuals, and we can see these individuals as members of groups. But we can't put systems on trial (honestly, has that ever worked?) and we can't prosecute groups if the guilty individuals don't exist any more.

The justice system isn't necessarily about making right. Actually making right is an impossibility. For example, nothing can change a murder. The only way family and friends of the victim can get over it is personally. The government can't help them. The system is as much about keeping order, it is as much about keeping the criminal from committing crimes again (the only way we seem to know how to do this is jail) rather than merely punishing and it is as much about making sure the victims don't seek revenge on their own. Though, in some cases, things can be made right (all stolen property returned, or what have you) that still doesn't remove the mental damage the victim feels (money doesn't get rid of this). It is more about order than right, though it should be about both. The justice system exists to make right as far as possible (but even the near-perfect execution of this is impossible) while maintaining order as best as possible (something much easier and much more possible).

Murder is worst, because it takes away the only thing we truly possess, our life. But it is also not worst, in the sense that, with death there is only nothingness, but with rape and dehumanization, there is suffering. So we must make a decision. Or maybe create a framework. Murder must be judged, at the beginning, the worst crime. The levels we have seem appropriate: negligent homicide,

manslaughter, second degree, first degree. Premeditated murder should be judged, at least at the outset, the worst of crimes.⁶ But should not there be something in the law regarding rape and torture and anything else we might deem dehumanizing that further punishes when the absence of murder is actually the greater cruelty?

We should institutionalize forgiveness, in the sense that victims of certain crimes (certainly not kidnapping victims, because of that whole Stockholm Syndrome thingy) may be given an opportunity by the system to petition for leniency, as a matter of course, rather than as a matter of the victims going out of their way, or having to do so publicly.

Forgiving is the only strictly human action that releases us and others from the chain and pattern of consequences that all action engenders; as such, forgiving is an action that guarantees the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew, in every single human being who, without forgiving and being forgiven, would resemble the man in the fairy tale who is granted one wish and then forever punished with that wish's fulfillment (The Philosopher 2005, 58-59).

I don't think people should be forced to forgive anyone. What I am saying is that we should make it part of the legal system, to give every victim of certain categories of crimes the opportunity to forgive or ask for leniency (or treatment, as the case may be). This should be done in private, and the judge should ask it only once, without any lawyers present. It could also be part of the parole process: when someone is coming up for parole the victims (again, of certain crimes) would be allowed to petition for leniency, if they so desired. The parole board would have to justify why this forgiveness isn't warranted, or some such thing. The Philosopher tells us that forgiveness is the greatest of human qualities. It's what most differentiates us from other creatures and it is a quality that allows us to live together, act together, and so much more. I would add to this to say it is also integral to liberal democracy. We must all tolerate each other as best we can, and this very definitely includes forgiving each other for all kinds of various (real or perceived) wrongs (whether they be criminal or not).

However, I am definitely of two minds about forgiveness. I think there are times when, for the good of ourselves, we need to stand up. That often means not forgiving. I can't personally tell you

⁶ The very worst of crime, genocide, is a combination of first and second degree, and conspiracy to commit, one would think, but we are talking about individual acts.

when those situations are, if they even happen. But I can't help but feel there are times when we gotta get angry instead. To deny anger is to deny ourselves. And this would be one of those fundamental conflicts that tear us in two.

Death Penalty.

I am totally opposed to the death penalty. If the right to life is our most basic precept, why can the state violate it, even under the most severe circumstances? “The state has the monopoly on violence in the given territory, duh.” But does that violence have to be lethal? Do we really want the state to be able to kill people legally? Furthermore, all murderers are not made equal. Circumstances for each and every murder are different. Can a “the murderer forfeits his or her right to live” approach really take those circumstances into account? Absolutely not. It allows for no real practical application, given the differences between negligence and first degree homicide, even without regard to the exact meanings in a criminal code. Furthermore, it is in total contravention to our humanity. Forgiveness, understanding, compassion, these are all things that elevate us above the other forms of life we are familiar with. Human life is sacred. It is, perhaps, the only thing that is actually sacred. We cannot take it arbitrarily (even a jury's decision is an arbitrary decision). More importantly, as we have seen time and again, judges and juries are people too. They make mistakes. Sometimes, they make big ones. Nobody wants to have a death sentence on their conscience (well, if you have a conscience you probably don't want an incorrect death sentence on it).

But all my moralizing brings us to the infamous question about Hitler: if you could go back in time and were given the opportunity to kill Hitler before the Holocaust or even before WWII,⁷ aka the second phase of the War of the World, wouldn't you do it? I think many of us would like to think that is the right thing to do, no matter how sacred we feel human life is. This would be a very utilitarian impulse, but that doesn't necessarily make it wrong. Perhaps some people really aren't redeemable.

Perhaps certain people do deserve to die. Now, I don't know where I'd draw the line. But I'm pretty

⁷ To appease myself, I'd say let's make it Stalin as many people seem to forget he was just as bad and, in a strict numbers sense, much much worse than Hitler. Or Mao. We also forget about him. Some people argue he was even worse.

sure I wouldn't draw the line for any minor, criminal acts.⁸ But I know that my view on this issue does not represent the *via media*⁹ that I regard so highly. And though many of you, on both sides, probably think it's terrible to compromise on this issue, away I go...

Let's not outlaw/ban the death penalty entirely. But we must make it very, *very* difficult to enact. Here is my suggestion (one I'm not entirely happy with, but I'm trying to compromise, not stick to my guns). The death penalty can *only* be considered in cases of *serial* murder or *serial* rape. There must be more than merely circumstantial evidence presented at the trial. There *must* be victims. That is to say, no death sentence should ever be allowed if the bodies have not been recovered.¹⁰ If this situation presents itself, and the jury feels there is no chance this person will ever be redeemed, then the jury can choose a death sentence. Automatically, the jury's view would be put up for review by another jury or an appellate court or, better yet, both!

“No fun! No one will ever get killed!” That would be the point. That's as far as I'm willing to go. I think it's reasonable. I don't like it one iota but I think it's a reasonable compromise. This compromise, if accepted, should be constitutionally enshrined. Only under the most *extreme* circumstances could we even consider the death penalty. “Nodier [said]...‘To kill a man in a paroxysm of passion is understandable. To have him killed by someone else after calm and serious mediation and on the pretext of duty honorably discharged is incomprehensible’” (Camus 1991, 40). Amen. This isn't mere compassion (not that there's anything wrong with that), this is philosophy. The world is a complicated place, with few single causes and few fully solvable problems and crises. Harm is everywhere. Intention doesn't mean shit. And it's nearly impossible to determine. Life isn't TV. We all make mistakes. And we have only one life to live. So, given these conditions, how does the death penalty make sense? While we're at it: How does a prison-only attitude towards crime make any sense?

8 Editor's Note: Is genocide the only crime that can be punishable by death?

9 Translator's Note: Literally 'middle road' but he means the moderate point of view

10 If I had my way, no one would ever be convicted of murder if the body were missing.

“Drugs, drugs, drugs. Which are good? Which are bad? Drugs, drugs, drugs. Ask your mom, ask your dad!”

All drugs are not created equal. The harm principle only applies as far as users use in the privacy of their own homes, to an extent that doesn't medically incapacitate them. In any society with publicly funded medicine, chronic drug use is a social problem. And drug use is often a cultural issue, especially a drug like alcohol. Such questions are mostly matters of policy, so there's no reason to have any kind of permanent, constitutional prevention against blanket “drug use.” Putting something in the constitution like “it is a citizen's right to have access to alcohol/nicotine/ marijuana” or, conversely, “the following substance should never be made legal” will not really help things as I see it. It's a policy thing, most importantly. With my libertarian background I'm liable to side with decriminalization/ legalization. I tend to believe that anyone can destroy their life if they wish, after all it is their life. But that is not a solution. It is an extreme/absolute and therefore is by definition not workable, whatever my personal sympathies may be. The other thing is that my view obscures the social effects (as libertarian views always do), via health care, for example. Besides, there's money to be made.

Taxation for fiscal purposes is absolutely inevitable..that the State, therefore, cannot help imposing penalties, which to some persons may be prohibitory, on the use of some articles of consumption. It is hence the duty of the State to consider, in the imposition of taxes, what commodities the consumers can best spare; and a fortiori, to select in preference those of which it deems the use, beyond a very moderate quantity, to be positively injurious (Mill 1974, 170-171).

The kind of approach we need falls somewhere between enforcement and legalization and is perhaps best embodied by Mark Kleinman's article in the winter 2007 issue of *American Interest*. This article has its drawbacks: it's about the US, it's overly economic in its view of the problem, it's no doubt lacking in philosophic depth, but it's the best suggestion for drug policy I've read in my life. So I'll use it in lieu of something better. And please watch *The Wire* if you haven't already. Think of *The Wire* as [what?] 'reading' for this section of the chapter.

He puts forward a number of principles for sound drug policy. I list them here:

1. goal of policy to minimize danger/harm to users and others
2. no harm, no foul

3. one size does not fit all
4. cost-benefit tests
5. programs that deal with great numbers (scale)

Principle number one is exactly what we should look for in drug policy. Declaring “war on drugs” (but not all drugs) does not work. Substances will be abused. A drug war might be feasible in an authoritarian or totalitarian regime, but that entails accepting all kinds of things we don't want to accept, all for some goal that isn't well defined, or even well understood, by many of its supporters. Personally, the stress I would put on this principle is to minimize harm/danger first to others, then to users who seek help, and to users whose families and friends seek help for them.

The second principle, “no harm, no foul,” sums up my attitude towards drugs. It embodies the “whatever you chose to do in the privacy of your own home...” argument. Well, at least until addiction begins. Criminal statues must be based on *harm*, not on vague concepts of “morality,” as we don't agree, and never will agree, on morality. And we can't agree on morality. Why not? Altogether kids: “Because it's man-made!” Exactly.

Principle number three is also essential. Not all drugs are the same, and not all users are addicts. A policy that treats all drugs (or rather all illicit and non-prescription drugs) as equal is silly. Think about the difference between caffeine and cocaine. Silly is a policy that treats all users as equal threats to society. If I smoke marijuana, the danger of me getting addicted is far, far, far less than if I shoot heroin. If I drink, chances are far greater that I will not be robbing someone on the street to support my habit than if I smoke crack (though I might still punch a few people in the ear because I'm crazy).

I have to disagree with principle four on principle. Personally, I think this problem, and many problems, are not really things we can put into easy categories for cost-benefit analysis. I think this is an overly economic idea that obscures reality. However, I recognize its usefulness in preaching to the “drugs are bad, umkay” crowd. It's like that *South Park* episode “Ike's Wee Wee” (ep. 204). Mr. Mackey knows drugs are bad because...well, they're bad, not because he's ever experienced an illicit

drug. It helps to observe and talk to users. If we can lower taxes enough, or direct that money to other things than waging war on drugs,¹¹ maybe such appeals to the pocket weaken the self-righteousness of those who support silly drug policies for “moral” reasons.

His fifth point is that we should be tackling dealers who deal in extremely large volumes, and not worry about the small time crooks. This is how the Hells, a more effective deterrent than the police, dealt with our dealers when I went to university. If I was supplying shrooms to students, I didn't have to worry. When I started trying to make a real business out of it, I got in shit.¹²

He then proposes a practical agenda. This agenda is directed to Our Neighbor and so is not wholly relevant to us currently, but it could be in the future. The ideas are mostly sound and worth discussing. I believe that this problem will never go away, and so we might as well do our best to try to keep on top of things by keeping up to date with suggestions, even if they come from countries whose problems are far more developed.

- Don't fill prisons with ordinary dealers.

This makes perfect sense to me. Ordinary dealers are not the source of the problem and often do it as a way of surviving. They may eventually become the source of the problem if allowed to continue in this mould, but the way out is not through jail, necessarily. One could argue that jail only furthers the situation, by keeping them in contact with the same types of people, and keeping them in a financial situation that, upon release, still requires drug-dealing.

- Arrest dealers based on violence, not volume.

This idea is also very reasonable. After all, that is the immediate problem. Especially in Our Neighbor to the South, drug-related violence causes huge problems. People who sell lots of drugs and don't murder, or don't assault, are far less of a social problem, though that's not to say there isn't still a problem (certain drugs, especially addictive drugs, have huge social and health costs).

¹¹ “Carver: You can't call this thing a war. Herc: Why not? Carver: War's End.” From *The Wire*

¹² And with the Hells, you're *really* in trouble. Unlike the police.

- Pressure drug-using offenders (rather than drug-users) to stop cold-turkey.

I don't know that this is a sound idea. Cold turkey is an extremely difficult way to go, apparently.¹³ However, if the right controls are set up in prisons, it could be made easier. That is to say, if we're really serious about this: solitary confinement until the habit's beaten. The idea is that users who haven't broken any non-usage laws aren't harming anyone immediately (though they are via the health system).

- Low-arrest crackdowns of flagrant drug markets.

This one is definitely more of an issue for Our Neighbor. But the idea is to break-up the area rather than to just throw everyone in jail. We could apply it to Gore Park.¹⁴ That would be nice. Then I wouldn't see the drug dealers while I'm at work each day.

- Deny alcohol to drunk drivers.

This idea is one of those that makes so much sense, I think 'why didn't I think of that?' Of course, it raises 'freedom' problems, but I think these are generally silly. Instead of just taking away the car, give a new license (that is suspended) and require it to be shown (as the ID) for alcohol purchase (at any bar or store). Obviously, this would cause problems. If we are serious about banning drinking before driving then why would someone necessarily have a driver's license when they go buy alcohol? Ah! There's the rub. So how do we get around this? Drunk driver's must submit all their ID to be replaced by new ID? I don't know.

- Raise alcohol taxes.

This is obviously an idea for Our Neighbor. It probably does make part of the difference between our two countries. Alcohol taxes are pretty fucking high in Ontario. But I do like treating alcohol like it really deserves to be treated, as a drug. In any case, we have higher taxes in this country. We need statistics to tell us whether that makes any kind of difference or not.

- Eliminate the drinking age.

¹³ I wouldn't know anything about this, as I believe in using beer to nurse myself off my liquor addiction

¹⁴ Translator's Note: An area of corruption and moral turpitude in downtown Hamilton

This is a very sound proposal. With taxes on alcohol going through the roof, kids would only be able to afford it if their parents gave them the money. This puts the onus on the parents, where it should be. They introduce their children to alcohol before they are even curious about it, like they do in Europe. We should perhaps modify this: if there is an adult present, the kid can buy or order, otherwise must be a certain age anyway. Because honestly, we don't want our toddlers buying booze. Honestly. That's a realistic scenario so it's a good point I brought up.

- Prevent drug dealing (as opposed to use) among kids.

Instead of saying: “drugs are bad, umkay, because they're bad” put the stigma on dealing. Put the emphasis, not on punishing the kid caught in the school washroom with a joint, but on punishing the kid who sold him that joint. When I say joint, I'm talking about cocopuffs, not about weed.

- Say more than “no” as “no” is simplistic and obscures the problems

Once again I go back to that *South Park* episode. “Just say no” and “drugs are bad” and those silly concerned advertiser's ads don't actually help things. Stop treating children like idiots. For me, what worked with smoking, was when I saw the effects on a person's lungs. Now, I know all kids won't respond to that, but it's better than saying “don't smoke because I said so,” where “I” is the authority-figure kids *want* to rebel against.

- Don't rely on DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

I personally know people who were very involved in the Canadian equivalent of DARE when they were in elementary school. They abuse. So what load of good did that do them? DARE and its equivalents are hardly solutions in and of themselves. Just like abstinence education doesn't solve problems but only creates problems when people start having sex and don't know what they are doing (or how to do it safely).

- Encourage less risky forms of nicotine use as alternatives to smoking.

I gotta say, I think chewing tobacco in its multifarious forms are far worse than smoking, for the user, if not for the public at large. So I think perhaps this one is a miss.

- Let pot smokers grow their own.

For me, legalization is the way to go here. But, in case people can't handle that, tolerating personal plants is reasonable because guess what it does: it gets rid of dealing. People growing their own, and not getting arrested/fined for it, will not seek out dealers.

- Expand opiate maintenance.

Not enough money goes into treatment. And then we see all these crazy toys the cops have. And we think, well, you'd have less heads to break with those if you actually spent money on treating people.

- Work on immunotherapies

This part creeps me out. I don't like this one. But then I'm a luddite, so I guess stuff like this is naturally going to creep me out. If the government puts money into immunotherapies, and finds them to be successful, they should never be more than voluntary. Ever. EVER. I said ever.

- Get drug enforcement out of pain relief.

The idea is to not worry about distributing certain substances to terminally ill patients. We do this a lot less up here, but there is still a difference, for example, between Quebec and Ontario. In Ontario, we are puritanical and obsessed that all our patients will get hooked on painkillers; in Quebec if you hurt and they believe you they give you what you need. There is a fine line here. I have been overmedicated in Quebec and undermedicated (for far more serious conditions) in Ontario.

- Create regulatory framework for performance enhancing drugs.

And about fucking time. Establish a code and say it is voluntary for leagues to be part of it. But, if a league is going to operate in the country, and claim fairness (this goes with the gambling thing below), then they should sign up, and they will put in money so that the government, as a third party, will test the athletes and so on.

- New attitude towards hallucinogens – scientific, religious and artistic uses.

Hallucinogens are not addictive, as far as I know. Though they can and will sometimes permanently fuck people up. There is no reason not to allow testing in labs and schools. There is no reason to deny them to religions. There is no reason to say: you can't use LSD to make crazier artwork. Well, unless you live in a socialist country with socialized medicine. Maybe then there's a reason.

- Stop sacrificing foreign policy and human rights to drug control.

This obviously applies to Our Neighbor to the South more than to us. But it is still a valid point. And we shouldn't support Our Neighbor on such policies. We should never support dictatorships merely to curb the spread of drugs. I personally don't think we should ever support dictatorships, but that might be a little unrealistic. But human rights in other countries are more important than restricting drug use in our own country. Also, most, if not all, foreign policy goals are probably superior to that of “curbing drug use” since it really isn't a foreign policy goal until it is made one.

This is the article: Kleiman, Mark A. R. “Dopey, Boozy, Smoky – and Stupid” in *American Interest* Vol II, No. 3, Winter 2007. I would advise everyone to read it. I mean *everyone*. It is worth **Your** time. It is an embodiment of the moderation I have been hammering into you over and over.

Education.

We need stricter standards in high school for courses that are university-streamed. But we need mandatory non-streamed (non-graded?) civics and critical thinking (re: advertising?) classes in high school, too. Universities should be harder to get into but college should be pretty easy to get into. University and college should be free, but there should be no restriction on private schools being created with the caveat that they get no public support at the detriment of public schooling (i.e., public schooling is funded and then if there is some kind of surplus the government could conceivably help out nondenominational private schools). High school should be flexible. If someone decided they

wanted to be a mechanic at eight but wants to be a geologist at fifteen there should be some kind of process for switching streams.

Perhaps the teen years aren't the best time for civics classes. Kids are going through things they don't understand, all they care about is fitting in, guys/girls, video games, and the like. After all, they don't pay taxes, yet. So we should have supplemental courses later in life when they are more likely to care about civic engagement. How do we do this? The government should completely fund courses at colleges, technical schools, and all other non-university level post-secondary education to teach civic engagement at this later age, which students take while learning their trade or profession. We get them interested by disguising the courses as something else. For example: sports arguments. A technical college would definitely not have problems filling a class called sports arguments. You get them in there, they learn how to argue and critique but they do it about sports. Then, there is one section at the end which shows them how to apply these ideas to more significant things. This obviously works for men; I don't know what would work for women. This idea might not work. However, it's definitely worth trying and if it does it would greatly improve the quality of our public debates.

...

The most important things, in avoiding cruelty, in being tolerant, in being *liberal*, are art and education.

So, you may ask, what is the use of studying a world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs and all arguments are equally good? One of the most obvious uses, I think, it is encouragement of tolerance. In the imagination our own beliefs are also only possibilities, but we can also see the possibilities in the beliefs of others. Bigots and fanatics seldom have any use for the arts, because they're so preoccupied with their beliefs and actions that they can't see them as also possibilities (Frye 1963, 46).

Literature must be a mandatory part of education, which it supposedly is, but we must insist that the quality of the teaching be better, or perhaps the quality of the curriculum. I had a pretty shitty English department in high school, and it nearly ruined the subject for me, though I read on my own. If I was exposed to great (and not necessarily Canadian) things at a far earlier age, even if I didn't understand it,

I might have more of this base in literature which Frye suggests and Rorty merely hints at. We need to stop short-changing our children. My kid(s) will be exposed to all kinds of music (because, unlike movies and, particularly, books, music can be part of their environment constantly) as an attempt to give him/her/them some kind of cultural base better than what they would get from the media and from public education.

Literature keeps presenting the most vicious things to us as entertainment, but what it appeals to is not any pleasure in these things, but the exhilaration of standing apart from them and being able to see them for what they are because they aren't really happening. The more exposed we are to this, the less likely we are to find an unthinking pleasure in cruel or evil things (Frye 1963, 60).

Frye also suggests teaching the Bible, because the Bible contains many of the most basic stories. I would add to this that we teach translations of all the major "holy" books, if we were to teach the Bible, as stories. This way kids will get allusions in later literature. Otherwise, how can they? Alright, enough of this.

Fairness in broadcasting.

I know I'm going for a society without libel, because I think it's stupid and restricts speech. We need 'fairness in broadcasting' guidelines like they used to have in the States. If someone slanders us or commits libel via the airwaves (or, conceivably, via print), then we are automatically given free time on air to respond, if we so desire (Lane 2006, 173-4). And when we say airtime, we are not talking about time on a show with the host responsible for the slander. We are talking about the person being allowed to come on TV and say, directly to the audience with no interlocutor, whatever it is they feel they have to say. But this restricts freedom of speech, in terms of the broadcaster's freedom, so this should only apply to certain forms of media: publicly or semi-publicly funded media, and it could be considered aspirational for private networks and channels, i.e., a government watchdog could inform the public that this station put up this view and has yet to put up a contrary view. We the people would then hope that the private broadcaster would aspire to do a better job. This may be the only way to overcome the nonsense going on down south.

One way to overcome the need for slander and libel laws would be to have a communications commission that monitors broadcasters and press for slander and libel, hears suits, and redresses them only by forcing the offenders to give the victims airtime or print space. This is much better than spending months in the court system each time someone feels they've been offended. So I figure, anyway.

Fallow Ground.

We now understand the reasons for property rights. They are necessary to protect the individuals from the government. There are obviously many problems with these rights, but I don't know how we can get rid of them. Anyway, strong property rights in our constitution would make fallow ground legislation unconstitutional, which is the way it should be. No matter what I have lying under my ground, if someone has to go through my ground, they need my permission. The government should almost never be allowed to force us to develop resources under our property, no matter what they are or why the society needs them. Except, if there were some crazy extenuating circumstance where it was going to save lives (just because I can't imagine it doesn't mean it wouldn't happen). But violating individual rights, even with prior warning, for the vague economic 'good' of society just isn't acceptable.

The free market.

We're pretty much stuck with capitalism. Every other economic system we've tried hasn't worked as well. And yet, capitalism sucks balls. I mean, it really does. A huge chunk of the world is poor and we're living off them. We have to ignore this, otherwise we'd all be paralysed by guilt and nothing would ever get done. Few of us are ready to save the world (and maybe that isn't such a bad thing). Most would just sit around and think “what a shame,” which we probably do a lot anyway.

If we were to go through a history of economic organization, we'd see a wide variety of types. Now, I'm not an economist, and I tend to take a rather disparaging view of economics,¹⁵ so this is not

15 It is not a true science, like Political Science, or Canoeing

going to please very many people. We have pre-money systems, which rely on bartering. We have money systems where societal constraints have kept economic growth to a minimum (feudalism would be the example I pick from the ether). We have capitalism, in various degrees. And we have state-controlled economic systems that have resulted from attempts to eradicate capitalism, in various degrees. And sometimes they call the middle area between the two “mixed,” but I would think that it's okay to still call it capitalism. We actually don't have many options. And now the good news. Bartering, in and of itself, does not allow for much “progress.” Neither does the form of economy that succeeded bartering. The only alternatives to capitalism, since its predominance, have resulted in massive deaths, more often than not, and the odd relatively benign dictatorship.

Capitalism (i.e. a system with at least some privately owned enterprise and using money), at the end of the day, is the best system. And yet it is horrible. Now that makes sense, if you think about it, because we will never create something perfect. Far from it. I guess most of us (except those of us who are extremely rich, and have made that money via capitalism) would like another system, or a modified system. Capitalism unabated will destroy us (see Diamond 2005). However, the other scenarios don't work either, and they don't work *now* (as opposed to in an idyllic future when human beings have somehow transformed themselves into better-than-humans, when all alternatives to capitalism work beautifully).

Here are a few of my ideas, that I think we all should reject. You might wonder why I put them forward if I think they should be rejected. Well, I think we are stuck with capitalism, so we need to modify it, so that it doesn't suck so much. If my wrong-headed ideas get someone else thinking about modifying our shitty system, then that's a good thing! I am no economist, and most (if not all) economists hate political solutions to economic problems.

- Bring back usury.

Usury laws used to exist whereby people couldn't charge interest, and then people could only charge so much interest. The very first problem with this is the infringement on individual rights.

But hear me out: if we can't charge interest, we get rid of the lending and investing that drives the whole system. We get rid of the ridiculous profits. We get rid of the ridiculousness-posing-as-rationality that is the stock market system. We also get rid of incentives for people to take the money out from under their beds or from inside their shoes. There would be no growth, I expect. For me, the idea seems commonsensical, until I spell out the implications. Then I realize that it would be fairly disastrous. So really we should always have limits on usury, as the recent economic crisis of sub-prime mortgages and credit swapping clearly indicates. Many states had removed all restrictions on interest rates. We saw pay-day lenders charging interest so high people could never make it to their next pay-day without a new loan. So the goal of usury laws is to keep interest rates capped at something that will not destroy society.

- The stock market really must be modified.

Traders, people who make their money from buying and selling stocks (rather than from investing in companies), prosper from instability. They get their commissions whether the majority of people are buying or selling (either way, someone is buying). They have an interest in insecurity. They foster and amplify economic prosperity but they do the same thing with crises. They are not the “rational utility maximizers” that many economists claim are involved in these transactions. They are people like you and me, and they are prone to everything you and me are prone to, like fear. It is fear, more than anything, that seems to motivate a lot of the stock market moves. And those who play the game well enough to avoid fear merely use mass fear to make a killing (sometimes killing people's investments while they're at it). I have no idea what restrictions might work (or what any might do) but I do know that if our system is to endure at all, the stock market as an institution needs to change greatly. We need restraint, not the chaos we get everyday (which most people in the business world seem to accept as typical and unalterable). Investments in debt (such as bundled mortgages) make no intuitive sense. There is no reason to allow them. Derivatives should not be considered legitimate investments. Credit swapping is

gambling, it's as simple as that. But it's actually worse than gambling, because it's gambling with other people's money. It doesn't get much lower than that.

- Stop treating corporations as people.

Corporations should not have rights in and of themselves, and actions against corporation should actually always be against the people in charge of corporations. This will never actually happen.

It would also greatly upset everyone. But the point is that I, or the government, or whomever, should never take companies to court, because that shouldn't be possible. We should take the owners and managers to court. I have a feeling this would inhibit investment, as well.¹⁶

Advocates of special treatment for publicly traded corporations, though they claim to be libertarians or laissez-faire folks, are actually supporters of group rights.

- Hold publicly traded companies to a special standard.

Once a corporation is publicly traded, it is no longer the sole property of its majority share holders, as such it cannot be regarded as their sole property. By selling shares to the public, the original owner is taking on a whole new role, with that comes different responsibilities and a far greater influence upon society. By taking a company public, an owner should be willing to accept greater public scrutiny and standards as to the operation of their company (whether those standards be environmental or financial). By going public, the company makes itself more responsible to the community (in this 'globalized' era the community would have to be defined as some region or something) rather than merely the collection of shareholders that have stock in it. The argument would be that such rules cannot be enforced upon a privately owned company, because one could argue that company is the owner's personal property. But once it is public, it becomes the property of many. It should not be considered fascist for a government to demand pollution controls for a publicly traded company. It should not be considered communist for a

¹⁶ One hilarious inconsistency many radicals support is this kind of reform: they believe corporations shouldn't be treated as people either. However, most of these people also feel like group rights should be legitimate. Treating a corporation as a person is a group right. Oops!

government to demand a public audit of a publicly traded company. Incidentally, shareholders should use their voices more. They should embrace proxy tactics, when they or their community are concerned about something. They shouldn't just let things proceed as per usual. I should do this too, given that I am a shareholder in some companies (I couldn't tell you which). However, I *write*.

- Bring back bartering on some scale.

I'm not sure this would work as value is always very problematic with bartering. I mean, that's what money is: it is a shared concept of value. Trading things is appealing though. It reminds us of a better time and place. I kid, I kid. But I know bartering is something that often happens underground, especially with the mass communication made possible by the internet and cell phone technology. I've heard of labels selling CDs for “art projects.” That is, I had to complete some kind of project and then they would give me the CD. Then there are book swapping organizations and the like. People seem to be doing this on their own initiative. I guess the idea should be, if we can barter something instead of sell it, isn't that better? We're removing the middle man (money). It will never work on a large scale because rarely will someone in your immediate vicinity actually have the thing you want to buy with the money you plan to make from selling whatever product you currently own. Oh well.

- The conservative in me wants a limit on retail hours.

Originally I was leaning towards a limit on working period, but imagine the unemployment crisis. So maybe we limit it to retail and the services, rather than everything (does industry, then, make too much to sell in that time?). So what I was thinking was say 72 hours (six 12-hour days) or some other number that stores can be open per week, at any time each store owner/manager chooses. I like the religious idea of no work on Sundays, but a non-religious regime can hardly advocate that. This is anti-capitalist, and illiberal. Maybe it's a compromise between banking hours and consumption 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But like I said, that's the conservative

in me. There are, no doubt, inherent dangers in such an idea, as with all government interventions. But it still sounds sane to say, “a maximum work week of 150 hours” or something less extreme.

- Debts should be always be forgiven at death, regardless of whether there are 'successors' who can pay them.

As with crime, we need forgiveness in finance. Death is a good physical line to draw where this forgiveness can occur. Perhaps this would discourage investment. Honestly, how many people lend money to old people? And, if someone dies without a will, the government is the last group that should get the estate. The government may need to administer it, but the government should be the last place any money goes, especially if there are kids involved.

...

“It is worth specifying that productivity is only injurious when it is considered as an end, not as a means, in which case it could have a liberating effect” (Camus 1991, 218). Productivity is not an end. I know people treat it that way, but it ain't an end. That's like making efficiency an end (and, as we saw earlier, that's just crazy). Aside from the whole problem of ends and means, we can't make something an end that doesn't *end*. I mean, we could, theoretically, always be more productive. So we need to overcome our view of things as ends and means. Increased productivity is good for a company because it allows them to make a better profit, so for a company increased productivity is a means. But how we can come to the conclusion that a goal of society is that it “is more productive” is beyond me. What would that entail? It's pure nonsense.

...

The number of people who work more than the supposed “40 hour work week” is astounding. Also, the number of people who do that but don't get paid for overtime is even more astounding. However, such ideas are illiberal; products of my own biases and, furthermore, would probably be

totally destructive to our economy. We need to find some kind of balance; I guess that's what I'm getting at. We need to work on finding some kind of compromise between the demands of businesses to make as much money as their employees allow them to (by agreeing to contracts, and there is nothing wrong with that in principle) and the health and other issues related to overworking, stress, and the like. It is quite shocking how people will work themselves into mental or physical breakdowns. At the same time, it is not the role of the government to do what is best for people, but merely to try to make things a little better than they might otherwise be.

I don't know if there is a middle ground here, or what that middle ground might be. On the one hand, if we limit the amount of time a given company can do business, then profits, productivity, and ultimately, our living standards will fall. On the other hand, if we continue along this path, we will certainly lose chunks of our working-age population to emotional burnouts and avoidable physical ailments, depleting the work-force, not to mention the huge, and perhaps unknowable, cost to the public health system, and perhaps also some impact on our already depleted pension system. The number of people I work with who "work" 60-90 minutes extra (or even more) per day seems rather high. There's no way their employer(s) approve all that overtime, otherwise the company would go bankrupt. Rather companies rely on guilt (people feeling they haven't done enough in a day, which is, after all, very short), on the corollary peer pressure (people see others working overtime and feel they also must so as to impress the boss. I have actually been teased by co-workers for going home on time; possibly some of the stupidest teasing ever uttered), on people's work ethics (some people just work harder and longer than others), on fear (people, despite the laws, believe that they will be fired for not agreeing to do over-time, or for only working their actually contractually agreed hours), and on other things to make many (not all) employees do a little extra here and there, skip breaks, contribute to company efficiency, and the like, for no or little financial gain on the part of the employee. I don't think that unions necessarily solve this, admittedly white-collar, problem, as people agree to this stuff all the time. A union may get rid of some of this bullshit, but it brings with it other organizational

bullshit.

...

The simplest economic thing is to make sure the poor have at least enough to get by.

I hold that the real tragedy is not unemployment per se, but unemployment plus the impossibility of providing adequately for the unemployed without impairing the conditions of further economic development: for obviously the suffering and degradation...which we associate with unemployment, though not the waste of productive resources, would be largely eliminated and unemployment would lose practically all its terror if the private life of the unemployed were not seriously affected by their unemployment (Schumpeter 1976, 70).

He may not be completely on the ball here, but the idea is sound.¹⁷ There should be a safety net, at the bare minimum. This shouldn't be accompanied by moralizing. Nobody likes being poor. We shouldn't look down at anyone less fortunate than us (and you shouldn't look down on my broke ass). People who dislike government "handouts" are more concerned about fairness and cheaters than they are about lives. There are some (sometimes many) cheaters but that is merely a cost of providing so many benefits. Well-intentioned (or not) systems are abused from the inside and the outside. That will never change. That is no reason for the government and citizens not to help people.

Gambling.

If people want to bet on a corrupt league that makes no claims to be purity, why not let them? If the is fixed, and doesn't claim otherwise, then the government should not have any reason to get involved if games are thrown, or what have you, for the benefit of one side or the other. I put it to you that a league can certainly not allow members (players/owners/whomever) to be involved in any kind of gambling and can ask the government help in enforcing this. That is, if the league voluntarily asks the government to enforce its bylaws through misdemeanour or criminal charges, I see nothing wrong with this. But the government should not worry about a league that doesn't claim to be free from gambling, and should not be worried about the corruption therein. It is none of the government's business if, say, you and I wanted to bet on wrestling, as long as wrestling doesn't claim that it isn't rigged.

In any case, gambling is something I don't personally have a problem with, but I recognize

¹⁷ Editor's Note: Even supported by Hayek, at least for a time.

that it gets out of hand. “You can't borrow tomorrow” after all. It's one of these things we have to regulate, and apply moderation and prudence to, because the extremes don't work. Most people don't have gambling addictions, and it is ridding the state of a very great source of money.¹⁸ It is a source of entertainment and a source of income. Seriously, does it get much better?

If the state isn't involved in the gambling, it makes it more difficult to ensure people don't fall through the cracks and it definitely makes it harder to ensure there is any kind of fairness. If we allow it completely then we have all kinds of people losing their shirts and our entire society feels the effects, often in a much more readily apparent way than they feel the effects of alcohol (because we can hide drunkenness to some degree, but debt is harder to disguise). When I lived in Melbourne I remember seeing slot machines in practically every bar I went to in Victoria. But in each washroom were cards for the Gambler's Help Line. We don't want that.

Gun control.

In Our Neighbour to the South, a gun is viewed as more essential than regular property. This rule was put in because of the British and the natives, and doesn't reflect the present. As there are different kinds of property, there are different kinds of weapons, and different kinds of guns. There is no reason that I can see to disallow hunting rifles in rural areas. I don't see why they'd need to be allowed in urban areas, unless we are playing “The Most Dangerous Game: Urban Edition.” I know there are those out there who feel a gun is part of their way of life. And it's better we let people shoot something inanimate than allow them to repress their anger for years until it comes out in actual violence against life.

As for in home protection, we could limit to one handgun. That in no way satisfies me. My belief is one that statistics back up: guns hurt more owners/family of owners than they do stop burglaries/home invasions. But maybe you say that a gun in the house makes you feel safer. Well, I think that's fucking crazy. The criminals outside have no way of knowing I have a gun or I don't have a

¹⁸ I like how in New York they make a big deal about how lottery money goes to education. That's fucking rad. I just hope it's true.

gun. When they invade my home (as they no doubt will do, especially if I don't run out and buy a gun right away...they're scheming at this moment, I can hear them...), they will not know about my gun unless I put up a “Beware of Gun” sign, unless I am home when they break in, and I am able to get it from its 'safe place' (I am presuming I have children and am not keeping the gun in their reach) and I manage not to shoot my toe off while I load it. Just because the home invasions in movies last ages, doesn't mean my home invasion will. Surprise of all surprises, I probably won't ever have my home invaded,¹⁹ provided I don't live in certain areas, and I don't leave the house and return at *exactly* the same time every single day. Basically, if a gun (a dangerous weapon that could easily maim/kill me if I don't know what I'm doing or when I'm in a rush...hmmm, I wonder when I would be in a rush?) makes someone feel safer, I don't think they truly understand what a gun is. And if all you can think about is protecting your family from home invasions well I gotta think you've been watching too much news coverage. You can spend your life in fear, or you can live normally and when some calamity occurs you can be unprepared like the rest of us.

Unlike Seneca, I do not wish to try to anticipate all the terrible things that could happen to me today. Because I think that, though Seneca could think about terrible things and not be afraid and therefore be able to deal with any eventuality,²⁰ most of us will be more afraid than prepared if we dwell on everything that could happen. It is better to think “how would I deal with a home invasion?” rather than “will my home be invaded today?” Maybe that's what he was getting at, and I just didn't understand him. That's always possible. Anyway, how would I deal with some kind of threat to my home and my imaginary family?²¹ Well, for one thing, I don't believe that these events would normally occur to us while we are home. If they did, I would hopefully go to the kitchen. But I don't know. I have no idea how I'd react. I just know the gun I don't own would not make me feel safer if I owned it,

¹⁹ Editor's Note: Robbers tend to not want to deal with people

²⁰ I think Seneca was neurotic

²¹ That's not to say I don't have a family, I just don't have a family in the nuclear sense of the term. I am not a husband or father. If you would like to change that, and you happen to be of child-bearing age with a toothsome body and child-bearing hips, you can reach me at 416-555-1234

and I would more than likely shoot something important to me rather than successfully fend off the chainsaw-wielding Texans that dared darken my door.

Healthcare.

One big question is how to pay for our medical care as the population continues to grow, and more complicated new technologies become presumably more expensive. The best system I know of is government-mandated externality pricing. An externality is the (often unforeseen) by-product of a normal transaction, in economics lingo. We do have some problems with government-provided health care the way it is.

“Government provision is [inefficient] because decision making is out of patients' hands, and resources are rationed by political processes...[What's needed is] a two part keyhole treatment...to ensure the widespread availability of information...[and] to give patients an opportunity to use this information” (Harford 2005, 124-125)

That is not to suggest we adopt some kind of crazy system like they have down south. Timmy here points out that getting health insurance from a job is as sensible as getting your food or your house from a job. The solution is a middle ground one, as always. It lies between private healthcare, which is something horrible, and the inefficient and often ineffective forms of government-run systems: externality charging:

The aim would be to give maximum responsibility and choice to patients, therefore requiring them to spend their own money...but to make sure that nobody faced catastrophic medical bills and to make sure that even the poor had enough money to buy medical care...everyone should have a savings account dedicated to medical expenses, to which the government would contribute in the case of the poor or chronically ill...If you reach retirement age with money still in your medical savings account beyond some minimum, you can put the excess toward your pension. When you die, you can pass the savings to other people's savings accounts (usually your spouse or children). So at every point in your life, you would have an incentive to spend money only on health care that you feel is absolutely necessary (Harford 2005, pp. 125-126)

The obvious problem with this idea is that you have more health problems the older you get; well, most people do. Otherwise it's a fine idea. We'd have a medical insurance account, with the government, that we contribute to from working age onwards. When we are little, either we'd be covered by our parents' accounts or the government would cover us. The poor would be covered by the government. The other problem with the idea is someone has to define “catastrophic” illness/injury so that still involves bureaucrat-rationed resources.

Holidays.

The notion that a business *must* be open, for its customers or whatever, is pure propaganda. It's just silly. Of course it doesn't have to be open, but it will make more money if it is. This is what I propose, exempting people who own their own business, as they can figure out when they are closing and opening on their own, I'm sure. If you have a company with various numbers of employees of different backgrounds, this is for you. If you own a convenience store, not so much then.

The government should recognize a certain number of the world's religions, as official, but *only* for the sake of holidays, and in no other capacity (except for sanctuary purposes...oops). It could then take the main holidays from each one, as well as various state days (July 1st, Remembrance Day, whatever) totalling at least one per month, and then it is the employee's option to pick which holidays. So, if you are Jewish, you take off your Jewish days, and maybe work the days that others don't. This way companies can stay open all Christmas day if they hire enough non-Christians (and anyone else who doesn't like Christmas!). Of course, companies could close more often, but I don't think that will happen.

As an example, state days might be: New Year's Day (because of tradition and a lack of religious significance, as far as I know), Valentine's Day (that's a joke... now we have Family Day...in Ontario!), something in March, something in April (I guess *I* could accept Good Friday from custom...that's fitting, since it's the saddest month, the *saddest* month), something in May that isn't Victoria day, something in June, July 1st, August Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving (tradition, again, because most people I know don't remember it is supposedly religious), Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day (why two? Because you can't take away our holidays, bitch!), and any other days needed to reach the total holidays for each religions (those numbers having to be equalized out of necessity). This is before vacation measured in weeks, you see. We still get our mandatory two-weeks plus whatever, of course (or whatever we as a society have worked out).

Pronounced Maawidge.

There's no reason to enact laws preventing two (or more) people to some kind of consensual union. Theoretically, it's a non-issue; there is no defence for giving marriage rights to some and not others. None. Well, except for the clear causal connection – demonstrated in numerous studies connected by conservative politicians – between the allowance of gay marriage and the increased occurrence of bestiality.

Marshall law.

A War Measures type of Act (or equivalent giving greater police/military powers, such as anti-terrorism bills) should probably require a super majority in the Senate for ratification, or maybe just a super majority when passing it in parliament. Another idea is to require a judicial review of any law that intends to temporarily abridge the constitution due to emergency circumstances. But the thing I want to strongly suggest (as the above stuff isn't necessary, it's just the libertarian in me trying to get out) is that, though parliament passes the war measures act, the powers would actually go to the Executive Council (EC). The EC would then be able to act within the limits of the war measures act, with the houses serving at its leisure, except in order to revoke the war measures act (obviously, the EC should not be allowed to suspend the houses if they are intending to repeal the act). I acknowledge the need to have special provisions, as much as I hate them and think we shouldn't have them. But the important point here is that a different body passes the law than will be enacting it. This way it would be hard to suspect the Prime Minister of trying to pass the war measures act in order to increase his or her power.

Negligence.

No matter how stupid someone may be, they do not deserve to die. If someone dies because they didn't follow some kind of rule, they didn't “deserve it.” I hear this shit so much. The other day at work²² someone was talking about a lady who went walking in the woods. This woman did not wear orange in what was apparently hunting season (I have no idea if it was hunting season, whether this was deep in

²² Editor's note: It was actually years ago as far as we can figure

the woods, or whatever...all that's irrelevant). But she still went on her walk. A hunter shot and killed her. According to a few of the people at my work, "she deserves anything she gets," She deserved to get shot because she didn't know it was hunting season, or she didn't bother to wear orange, or she decided to go for a walk. Obviously, she was a terrible person who forfeited her right to live! Maybe you say this "deserve" thing is just a figure of speech. It's more than that. People have trouble conceiving of death. This woman is dead. She is gone. She has ceased to exist. She is nowhere else. It's over for her. And this is fine because she decided to go for a walk, either in spite of, or in ignorance of, certain rules. If someone violates the rules of our society, and is killed as a result, this does not exonerate the killer. It doesn't make the death just, either. What kind of society would that be if anyone who violated any rule, whether such a rule was in place for safety reasons or for any other reasons, deserved to die and the trespasser's killer was instantly exonerated? Well, it would be chaotic. It would also be fatal to many of us. Let's not be so cruel. As for the accidental killer, that is also very difficult to understand. Though we may indeed feel sympathy we cannot just absolve the person instantly. Could we make some kind of provision so that the victim's family could opt for absolution in negligence cases?

Nudity

There is only one reason I can think of to not allow all-out nudity: public health. Not mental health, but physical health. What makes nudity dangerous? I'd like someone to explain that to me. We are born naked. We would live naked if we all lived in 45 degree²³ weather 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We would die naked if we lived naked. We shower naked. Some of us swim naked. And tan naked. And yet, a vast majority of the population of not just our wonderful country, but especially Our Neighbour to the South, are petrified by the idea of a naked person. By nudity or nakedness, or what have you, I of course mean only that the reproductive organs are showing. If the parts of the body are not

²³ How dare you even think that I could mean Fahrenheit. Fahrenheit only exists because of custom and power. Old people can't change their minds, and Our Neighbor keeps up its Fahrenheit propaganda. That propaganda must be stopped. It makes perfect sense to base a temperature scale on something that has visible consequences. The freezing of water has tangible effects even on the deaf, dumb and blind. Up Celsius/Centigrade!

reproductive they are permitted. This is an odd attitude coming from the “culture of life” folks, but I don't think I can explain it, try as I might.

The ass isn't reproductive, but it connects with what underlines the fear of the reproductive areas: sex; wild, crazy, animalistic sex. I think that a lot of us get a great deal of pleasure (or relief, to say the least) from taking a dump that's been brewing for a while, or even just dropping one black kid off at the pool. In any case, this sensation is that of release (often accompanied by 'awws' and such). Perhaps it reminds people of sexual release.

It is those parts of the body, excepting the feet,²⁴ that are most associated with sex that are the only parts included in the definition of nudity. Nudity is about sex. It is not about nudity. If it were just about plain old nudity, the form we were all given at birth, no one would give two shits. Nudity has been sexualized for a rather long time. Our current prohibition of it seems to me to be very Victorian. Regardless of why we started not allowing nudity (“it's not civilized,” etc), by hiding our particulars, we sexualize them. By making certain displays forbidden, we add a certain element of thrill to seeing a woman's tits or cunt, a man's dick, both sexes' asses, occasionally a woman's belly (if you're a 90s 'country'²⁵ fan) and whatever other part we decide is not fit for mass consumption. This certainly causes sexual frustration and dysfunction. And obsession over certain kinds of body parts that would probably be far less widespread if we were all naked whenever we felt like it. Every glimpse of one of these parts is then deemed offensive, no matter how non-sexual the context. And that's the bizarre thing. We get movie ratings based on an ass cheek while someone is taking a shower, not on the real-looking violent deaths of 19 people during the commission of a crime. Everything is sexualized. The aforementioned showering. Taking off clothes. Toileting. I know this sounds Freudian of me, but if we were so scared of nudity because of its association with pissing and pooing

24 Editor's Note: Ostensibly, the foot fetish is the most common sexual fetish in the world, it certainly appears to be so by a quick perusal of fetish porn sites. Yet, we do not obsessively cover up our feet. If the foot fetish were as common as is suggested, we would never tolerate sandals.

25 Translator's Note: Haas writes: “I put quotes on 'country' because I refuse to regard the pop music that passes as 'modern country' as real country music. Just because someone has an accent (real or otherwise), or because someone bought a pedal-steel, does not make pop music country.”

instead of sex, we wouldn't have so many public bathrooms, being pee-shy (like me!) wouldn't be so socially unacceptable, and we wouldn't care about naked boobies, or naked bellies.

There doesn't appear to be much of a reason for our nudity taboos except for the fact that nudity was regarded as savage and inappropriate. Well, and the weather. In certain countries, such as ours, nudity is stupid. Nudity makes no sense in most parts of Canada, most of the time, because we'd all get hypothermia and die right quick. But does that mean it should be illegal in public? Incidentally, traditionally, in China, they didn't care about breasts at all, but rather they cared about feet – deformed feet in particular. It was this part of the body that had to be hidden, and was the object of sexual desire. Once again, this is why it had to be hidden, it was sexual. Men craved women's bound, deformed feet. No one seemed to care, one way or the other, about breasts. This is just more evidence that our attitude towards nudity is purely a cultural tradition, and really not based on anything concrete.

A few years back, us smart Ontarians actually decided to allow women to go topless on the street, outside of the traditional “topless” beaches that dot countries and destroy the moral fibre of any decent person who dares approach their desolate boundaries. What happened? Have you, my fellow Ontarians, seen many half-naked ladies lately? I sure haven't. As I said before, it gets cold in Canada. Also, nudity is still socially unacceptable, on the whole. So, even when people are allowed to walk naked wherever they want to, they often choose not to. People are shameful. I don't want my johnson on display for everyone to see. But that doesn't mean I should force someone else to cover it with a sock. We are only concerned about the moral/mental/psychological effects of nudity on ourselves and our children because we have sexualized it to such a ridiculous degree that everyone everywhere thinks about sex the moment they see a bare (female) tummy. It doesn't have to be like this. The first step is to make full blown nakedness totally legal in all public areas. Businesses can still refuse service to people without shirts or shoes (but not without pants?²⁶).

The only concern, as far as I am concerned, that nudity poses for all of us, is a public health

26 “No shirt, no shoes, no service.” I should take someone up on that. I've got shoes, I've got a shirt, but I forgot my pants.

concern regarding urine, feces, and crabs (read: STDs²⁷). As a friend of mine once pointed out to me as I argued vociferously the reasons for not banning nudity, “what if someone doesn't wipe their ass and then sits on a seat on the TTC?”²⁸ What if I then sit on that seat with my naked self?” Aaah! A few options present themselves to my mind. First, we could allow nudity in public, but provide certain prohibitions: naked people can't sit down or, more reasonably, naked people need a special seat cover if they are going to sit on a bench somewhere or ride the transit. Naked people can't ride the bus/subway/streetcar/tram – period – unless they stand up. Or some variation. Second, we could say to anyone who is scared of people who don't wipe their asses, who have leaky-dick syndrome,²⁹ or people who wish to smear their STDs on everything: wear fucking pants! Still, we cannot allow peeing³⁰ and pooing in public. That's just too much of a health risk. I don't know quite how to frame that law. Sex poses the same problem, not to mention the possible emotional consequences for the observers.

On a related note, we have the issue of burqas and various costumes that people might wear for whatever reason. Obviously it doesn't pertain to nudity as such, but it pertains to clothing regulations, which is pretty much our topic here. Should people attending a publicly funded institution be allowed to wear some kind of clothing which implies ideals not consistent with those of the society? Of course they should be. For one thing, we should all be free to wear whatever we want, regardless of our reasons (our reasons should be immaterial). But further, if they can't, we have to ask all sorts of questions about standards, none of which have obvious answers. Why are these people wearing these clothes? What ideals do these clothes imply? How are these ideals implied by said clothing in conflict with the ideals of this society? What the hell are the ideals of our society, anyway? Somebody, or some group, has to answer these questions and interpret these various vague concepts. This can only go one direction: discrimination. And discrimination leads to hate and lots of other worse things. On

27 Are they still called STDs? I'm not hip to the current acronym.

28 Thanks, Ben!

29 Editor's Note: Hass was such a sufferer and some thought it played a role in his death.

30 Except when you're drunk and you really, really have to go, and you pee on a tree. I was once verbally abused by some foreigners for peeing on a tree in Australia. Everybody does it here. Why isn't it okay to do it in Australia? They weren't even Australians, the ones who verbally abused me.

the other hand, what a private institution wants to do with clothing should generally be up to them, at least in theory.

Obscenity

The only 'pornography' that should be banned is stuff depicting illegal acts (obviously, journalistic work is excepted). But that stuff isn't porn anyway. Well, not for most people. But I can't help my love of necrophilia. So I must have the right to watch Molly Parker fuck dead guys,³¹ or I get to watch *Regurgitator*. Or else how can we call this country free? But seriously folks. If someone wants to watch two women and a man make an ass omelette, who's to stop them? What is so wrong about that? It should be up to the business owner whether he or she displays pornographic materials or not. The government should have nothing to do with it.

One of the concerns about porn has been the oppression of women. I definitely think that still goes on in many countries, and in ours to some extent, but things have changed over the years. There is a porn mainstream that does not oppress women, that pays them far more than the males, and that has many female producers, directors, and writers. There are women who are in porn because they have to be, and it's somehow a step up from prostitution (one would hope) and there are women who do it because they enjoy it. Making porn illegal, or making most of it illegal will not change that. If anything, making porn illegal makes it more dangerous for the women involved, just like with prostitution. If porn is socially acceptable, it becomes easier to enforce societal and legal standards in porn.

It's also useful to talk about porn for another reason. Porn illustrates the negative effects of censorship. Just think about it. It has taken forever for AV porn to get production values, to get plots, to get reasonable sex situations and behaviour since video tape changed the industry. The artistic development of porn was virtually nil for ages after the introduction of video, because of censorship.

When only a glimpse of porn was enough to titillate, that's all that was necessary for development.

³¹ Editor's Note: Hass was originally going to dedicate the Canadian Edition to Parker, and it is clear he never made a final decision. We made the decision to pick the dedication to Pare because she was nearer Hass in age.

Show a little sex, no matter how little fun the woman was having, it would sell. We got ridiculous cliches out of this, and sex scenes where the women couldn't possibly be enjoying themselves in any way (due to violence, due to speed, or due to bizarre positions or toys that were not meant for anything but the viewer's enjoyment). Porn tends to suck, because of censorship. It seems only since the rise of the internet that there is actually acceptable stuff out there. That's not to say it isn't mostly shit, as it's mostly shit and mostly disgusting. Mostly. It's just something to think about.

No one has ever successfully defined obscenity. Like many concepts, it is culturally and contextually specific, and even within the same cultures and contexts people have totally different ideas of obscenity. It is one of those things that is far too subjective to legislate in any kind of appropriate way. That's why the definition of obscenity has to involve some depiction of a criminal act, because without that criminal act there is no objective measure to judge each other's tastes or fetishes by. The moral zealot is just as likely (I would say more likely) to misjudge the appropriateness of something as the most “depraved” sexual adventurer. Whether it's porn, swearing, or something else, obscenity is always relative and therefore cannot exist as a crime, unless something criminal is actually taking place.

Patents

I'm not sure there is a problem with most people keeping patents on their inventions for a very long time. But in the case where there is a need, either here, or in another country, for a drug, or some other medically beneficent contraption, like a Segway PT, we need to find a spot between the immediate publication of the recipe with little to no compensation and the high compensation and very long patents. For me, this middle spot could be death. If people are dying, especially if people are dying in the country where the patent is held (not that this is morally superior, but rather because it is practically more feasible. That isn't a very nice thing to say, so be it), because they cannot afford the drug, then a government can, perhaps, invoke special circumstances (some kind of emergency protocol) where the patent holder (rarely the scientist, no doubt...that's a whole other issue, innit?) is given a choice, give

the recipe to the government and allow the government to manufacture the drug until the emergency is deemed over, by the government ,no doubt, or to allow other private companies to make generic versions. But we as a society need some kind of criterion.

Prostitution

There's a reason why prostitution is labelled “the world's oldest profession”; it is. If something has existed most of the time we have existed, doesn't it make sense to allow it? There are obviously numerous policy considerations around legalized prostitution but, aside from vacuous moralizing, what arguments are there against legalized prostitution? It's better to let people do as they will, rather than spend time, money, and the huge amount of energy required for moral outrage on trying to stop them. It's usually safer and healthier for everyone too.

So, if we accept prostitution as the fact of life that it is, the big question becomes: to red light or not to red light? And honestly I don't have the answer. I know of successful red light districts in many cities. I also know how some red light districts become much worse than just a place where I can see boobies for money. This is a total cop-out but what we need is a ton of studies about how to create successful red light districts or about why just out and out allowing prostitution and stripping is better than secluding it in a red light district.

The provinces

Since I am from Ontario, I don't think I care about what form of liberal democracy other provinces have, as long as it is approved by the federal government (properly constituted). I am of two minds about provincial governments. I think that maybe they should have a less complicated structure than the federal government because they are theoretically less powerful. Conversely, they no doubt affect our lives to a greater extent. So maybe they should be as or more complex. The same can be said of municipal governments. But I don't know what to say about this. I guess the form of provincial government should be left up to the province, provided it in no way violates the federal constitution, or the principles it is based on. I personally don't like having merely one house. I would think many

Ontarians have been dismayed either by NDP or PC (or both!) rule in the past few decades and I think that an altered form of government at the provincial level, at least in Ontario, is not a bad idea.

Perhaps we should look into the possibility of having an institutional check of power at the lower levels, as well. That is to say, if a certain number of provincial legislatures voted to call an election federally, it would be called. And the same could apply to municipal governments and the provincial government. Let's say, as an example, they need the support of four-fifths of the provincial legislatures. And each of these legislatures need a supermajority of three-quarters to support it. It would have to be introduced by one province/territory and passed on to the others. The same would apply for municipalities. In the case of the municipalities, there would have to be a lower limit to which municipalities could participate.

All undeclared powers should reside with the provinces not the federal government. However, to keep that from getting silly, if the EC, the Parliament, the House, and the Senate all approve by a super-majority then these powers could be transferred to the federal government. Wait, that isn't silly?

Public salaries

There are a number of possibilities regarding the salaries of our illustrious, elected public servants. Here they are: no salaries, low salaries, low salaries plus monetary incentives, low salaries plus non-monetary incentives, salaries like they have now, higher salaries. There are probably others, but none that I consider worthwhile. That's right, you read me!

- *No Salary*: The argument here is that if we don't pay our politicians, only those who really, really desire to be political leaders will run for office. These individuals will have the highest of motives and will be outstanding citizens, yada yada yada. Well, the first problem with this is that no salaries means no politicians. Those who do run for office will have to, out of necessity, be the very rich. Now, we already have enough rich people running our country, we don't need more. Also, the rich dominate the economy; wouldn't it be nice if another group dominated the

government? We would basically be creating a position that would be designed solely for the “leisure class,” that is: people who have too much money and too much time together in one terribly unholy combination.

There are those in the past who have defended this idea and suggested that we need a leisure class for this purpose; the leisure class is the only class that can truly deliberate and rule and so on so forth (the supposedly democratic Greeks come to mind). I would like to say that I have read so many satires of the leisure class in my time that the more power they get the more scared I get. I suggest reading Huxley or watching one of the innumerable celebrity gossip shows for reasons why the rich have better things to get annoyed about than politics. They've got gossip!

Incidentally, England ran this way for quite some time. They actually fought over giving salaries to politicians. Who ran England before salaries? The aristocracy, that's who. And it was splendid. Besides, in our society, most activities are encouraged by material or monetary incentives. Unfortunately, the realm of elected officials is not immune from this. So we must travel forward in our great journey and seek out alternatives to this idealistic and very impractical non-monetary system.

- *No Salary but Room/Board*: This choice sounds almost platonic.³² Don't pay them, but provide for them. Give them a room. Give them decent meals. Pay for their (necessary) travel. I think both this idea and the previous one leave our politicians far too interested in bribes/ “campaign contributions”. Also, the job may attract the homeless. Well, they can't afford the campaign costs, so I guess that's not gonna happen. But it might still primarily attract the well-to-do. Unless the accommodations really suck. And we forced them to live there. But all of this sounds kind of ridiculous. So let's drop it.
- *Low Salary*: One alternative to having no salary is having a very low salary. When I say low I mean fucking low, people. I'm talking poverty line low here. We pay our elected officials just

32 Editor's Note: In the *Republic* Plato discusses putting the governing class in a barracks.

enough so that they are above the poverty line. This instills a “servant” attitude into these people that is otherwise lacking in our society. Politicians today (though they were way better in the past! Trust me, I was there) are hardly “public servants” and certainly don’t act any manner befitting the title. So let’s put them in their places with a shitty salary. Or so the argument goes. Who actually makes this argument? Anybody esteemed? Well, no, not that I know of. I make it when I’m mad.

- *Low Salary plus Monetary Incentives*: Well, if that one doesn’t work why not something else? One option is that the constituents get to vote on whether or not the member gets his or her incentives. Or an independent auditor general gets to decide. Or some other non-partisan body. Why not? It sounds like a great idea! But this is my concern with this idea: what about those people who are in politics for other reasons than money. Personally, I would suggest that these people are the majority of politicians. I think the maxim is generally true: we don’t go into politics for the money. We need other incentives. It will also further encourage politicians to be primarily concerned with getting elected. This is a problem. Some of us would prefer if they were totally altruistic and “did the right thing” when they serve. But incentives probably will make them even more susceptible to polls. It’s just a thought.

- *Low Salary plus Other Incentives*: So here’s the Dealy McDeal: You know how politicians are always getting these cozy civil service positions after they finish their time as an elected official? (By the way, I’m not including the Senate, because in my world, I am a goddess...um, I mean in my world there is no Senate at the moment) Well, we would make these positions conditional. That is to say, if a politician in the position to do so, wished to appoint a former politician to a cushy civil service post, the former politician would need the approval of his or her former constituents. At the end of every term, we the proles will vote on our satisfaction with said politician. If the politician has enough pass votes (we’d have to come up with a mechanism) he or she is then eligible for cushy ambassadorships to Monaco. Hey, relax, it’s just an idea.

Another idea: the Order of Meritorious Politicians of Canada. If our politician does good and we like what he does, we can nominate him for the OMPC. Maybe that's when the "your honour" term can come into play. That makes sense to me. Seriously. Because politicians love that shit.

- *High Salary*: The flip side of that coin is paying our elected officials like business executives. Government is the biggest business out there. In order to promote quality we must attract the best people, and the way to do this is with the highest salaries. Personally, I find this idea applies more to the appointed or bureaucratic side of our public officials, and it doesn't really hold much water for the elected ones. But then I don't agree with that argument either. Governments should be effective, not efficient. They should be held to standards different than private sector standards. So the analogy about government being big business doesn't really hold water with me.

Salaries should be competitive. That is my final say in the matter. Though we don't like paying our politicians, we *have* to. And we're not going to attract very many good people if they can't live off the salary, or if they can't live the way they want to off the salary. They should be flexible, and they should be comparable to bureaucrat and private sector salaries (not all private sector salaries, obviously, as some of those are crazy).

Squatting

Some people are completely opposed to squatting, on account of the property not being used by its rightful owners. Some people are completely for squatting, as the homeless need somewhere to go (though not all squatters need be homeless, like in *My Private Idaho*). As with everything, there can be a middle ground. We should establish a time limit for an abandoned property to be deemed squatable, or what have you. There would be exceptions to this, like the owner somehow became incapacitated and was unable to do anything about ensuring the continued use of the property. Of course, at some point, property taxes would come into play. Which is an awfully nice segue to...

Taxes

What kind of taxes are acceptable? Is a progressive income tax system the way to go? What about sales taxes and service taxes? Are there some things that should be immune? Should taxes that are specifically for particular services be paid only by those who use them?

I think we should have taxes on ridiculous severance packages, not necessarily on reasonable severance packages. There should be some kind of threshold, that changes with inflation and shit, and so companies cannot pay their corrupt/failing/whatever CEOs \$200 million to go away, without that corrupt / failing / whatever CEO getting his ass taxed off. Maybe tax the company too? The onus should be on the company to prove the CEO didn't commit / hide fraud...at least if that company is publicly traded.

Lump sum taxes are supposedly fairer (or at least more “efficient”) than income taxes. However, the problem with lump sum taxes is you can't predict the future. You can't predict who will turn out able to pay a lump sum tax and who won't. They're just dreams of economists and we should forget about them. Externality taxes are probably a much better idea. But they can never cover all the government's expenses. It certainly is a way of dealing with many problems, however. Especially pollution.

Government-imposed externality charging is far more likely to be appropriate in situations where a negotiation over the externality will not work, as in the case of the noise from low-flying aircraft. The more likely people are to be able to sit down around the table and work something out, the more likely government intervention is to screw things up...Externality pricing will work very well for problems such as congestion and climate change, for which individual negotiation is nearly impossible. For smaller-scale situations we must ask where the government-imposed cures are worse than the disease (Harford 2005, 101).

We can't abandon income tax, but perhaps we can lessen the burden by having more government-imposed externality taxes: user fees. The biggest issue for this form of taxes is equality: they tend to destroy the perception of equality.

I still can't help but believe that the fairest form of taxation is a progressive form of income tax, based wholly upon income brackets (whether that income is in the form of a salary or whether is made from investments; it's still income). We should note that Warren Buffet believes he doesn't pay

anywhere near enough taxes. If he thinks that, how can I be wrong?

Transparency

There is no reason to keep things secret via 'national interest' or 'national security' for the most part. If certain people in the government think certain issues should not be subject to full disclosure (say, for example, if we were fighting a war) then they must apply for permission from the elected officials to keep secrets, for a given time. The problem with this, as I learned from a bureaucrat, is that bureaucrats then only do things in person or on the phone. Everything is done by voice and nothing is written down. I'm not sure that's a very good option either. Still, I like the idea that anything can be seen, except say military plans in war. Lord Acton said, "Every thing secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity." And I agree with him.

Unfortunately, back-room deals, bargaining, and concessions will not go away...ever. Someone will always escape responsibility, someone who should be accountable will always manage to get away with something. The object is to minimize this type of stuff. However, this will not be accomplished for ever, for all time, at any given moment, rather it is always a work in progress, an experiment.

Treason

Personally, I tend to think treason is silly. But I guess in this era where we still have nation-states ostensibly still in competition with each other, we must still think about treason. I gotta think that treason is one of the least serious offences one could get charged with. But that's because of my definition of it. I figure many different ideas could be included in the word. For me, it would just be something like: selling our secrets to foreign powers, if we even have any worth any money, or...well, that's about it. Everything else I can think of could be covered by regular criminal statutes, regardless of the involvement of another country. And if all someone has done is sold our secrets, like a description of that secret military base near Ottawa, to Andorra, then should they really get much jail time?

Transit

I've seen the future of urban planning, and it's in Fort Meyers, Florida. Ramps instead of left-turn lights! Or tunnels instead of ramps! Why not tunnels? In all seriousness, the time for transit is now! We need not just local transit plans, but a federal funding scheme. The federal government should send up some broad and flexible parameters and the various urban areas of the country (not just the individual cities, it's bigger than that) should, with the provinces I guess, work out the specifics. For example, it should be the goal of Ontario and the various cities of the GTA to create an integrated and up to date transit system. Our system pales in comparison with other areas. This is traditionally not the time and place to talk about such things. Whatever.

As much as I like the one-fare-for-any-distance aspect of the TTC, I recognize that it is not feasible for a larger system. What a new system would require, first, is a distance-based fare system, as they have in, for example, Melbourne, Victoria. There are many benefits for the consumer of our current single ticket system, however it is not particularly cost effective. With a distance-based fare system, users are paying more approximately for the amount they use the system, rather than a flat rate. That penalizes commuters, but it's better than driving two hours. Or at least that's what I think.

On this same theme, we need one system from Hamilton (or even farther around the lake) to Oshawa, and from the Islands to Barrie. Subway in the major city centres (Toronto, obviously, but why not some other places too?), connected or morphed into a train system that covers most of the area. Tram and streetcar systems where there is no subway. With buses covering the non-subway and non-tram routes and any out of the way place not covered by trains. In Melbourne, again as an example, the trains become the subways, and vice versa. Sometimes I like that idea. However, keeping trains separate would allow them to be express from the suburbs to the city, whereas turning them into subways would probably mean no, or few expresses, or a huge project to increase the number of tracks.

Also, we need to think about semi-privatizing the transit service, though obviously not the infrastructure. Some cities have more than one company running the trains and buses. In Melbourne

two companies compete for a greater or lesser share of the system. This ensures that the buses are regularly on time. They also were way ahead of us in terms of information about the next train, as they had electronic information on train platforms about the next train a full seven years ago, when we've just started to do it in Toronto.³³ This may be the subject of my next book.

Welfare

There should be a basic minimum welfare, near the poverty line, that isn't very good. There is more money for those who can indicate to the government that they are actively searching for jobs, but this is not a permanent level (one would move up or down). Then there are government run and government contracted workfare programs that pay more, with the possibility (at least within the government side) of actually getting a real, permanent job. This is all voluntary. If they don't want it, they can take the basic shitty welfare. Or something like that. “Man does not live by welfare alone” (Frankl 1959, 141). He means that just giving someone money to live on, or food, or giving them a job won't give them enough to really live a meaningful life. On the other hand, “welfare mothers make better lovers.” So we should drastically increase subsidies to welfare moms for that reason alone.

³³ And we're probably bragging about it. We like to think we're the centre of the Universe in Toronto. We put in an all-way pedestrian crossing at Dundas and Yonge and called it a revolution. The same thing had existed in Lennoxville, Quebec (that is, in the middle of nowhere) for years and years previously. And nobody was bragging about it.