

2028

The Civil Society

Richard Nigh

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SHORT INTRODUCTION

As with everything else about this book, this will be short.

This book isn't meant to be factual or accurate in any way. It's short because it needs no more to offer its new point of view. You, dear Reader, can decide what needs to be added. As to its purpose, hopefully it will start some discussion and lead us to understand how we can create a society that is compassionate and civil. It may be done in the way mentioned here or in some other way; however, in the end, I hope you are convinced that compassion and working for the good of all will serve us well for establishing a society that is strong economically and socially.

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2028: THE CAMPAIGN

Same old; same old. Another vicious round of Republican and Democratic Presidential primaries. The Republican primary was most memorable as the President himself barely squeaked out a victory over a candidate who, no matter what he'd voted for in the past, didn't seem to be a Republican anymore and had grown increasingly independent of the status quo. The President had come into office promising to again save Social Security by raising the age of retirement to 72, after already raising it to 71, and to get the economy moving for the middle and lower classes. He ran on experience. He railed about the need for a strong defense, about fighting terrorism and crime, and about good family values. He went to church every Sunday to look the part of the Christian leader needed in this troubled day and age.

The Democrat ran on helping the people of the country instead of the rich, but for some reason, a huge chunk of the voting public still believed that a good Christian man in the White House would be the answer, no matter that those posing as Christians – like the President – could easily say they had faith and values. They were just as susceptible to DC money as anyone else. Unfortunately, the Democrat was not portraying himself as religious enough to appeal to that huge chunk of voters that voted their values. But he did have support. He had to, of course, to gain the nomination. He thought that Christianity meant doing good for others, and he ran on a platform of doing good for the people. However, many voters wanted a Christian, not a doer. And that was his weakness. Time would tell if the values voters would actually get out and vote.

The only man who understood the real problems of social and economic inequality -- but didn't yet understand them well -- was a man with an uncommon name, Jeffrey Barspool. Senator Jeffrey Barspool. In 1966, he said, children in residential areas near big cities could go out and play in their yards or around their neighborhoods without being watched every moment. 50 years later, people were calling the police on parents who let their kids play independently, reporting them as negligent. In the sixties, President Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act, but over 60 years later, there was still discrimination, racism and racial inequality. In the sixties, many people had left their doors unlocked. By 2028, one would have to look very hard to find a

house without locked doors, security cameras, systems and more; that is, people locked up their homes like prisons. People were afraid to let their children out and afraid for themselves as well.

He treated these problems as social problems that the same-old government couldn't answer. What had happened to the people of the United States from the end of the Great War until the present? People were different. Culture was different. Social etiquette had been replaced by social incivility. He continually asked himself why and what could he do to solve this problem.

As the race for the nomination continued, his ideas evolved, and at the end when he lost to the President, he threw his name into the ring and declared himself an independent candidate. A stronger had not been seen. Both parties worried that he'd take voters from them. Try as they might, neither party, could keep him out of the debates, the first of which was called *The Debate of the Century* even though the century was only a quarter used.

EXCERPTS FROM THE DEBATE OF THE CENTURY

Question about Social Security:

President Grady: "The Social Security System is in danger of becoming bankrupt, as it has been for years. In 2012, we were being told that it had perhaps another 20 years. The reserve would then dry up, and Social Security would be no more. We are approaching that time, and in my first term, I added to its lifespan by raising the retirement age to 71. We must make changes. Because of the growing number of recipients, I support a raise in the retirement age to 72, which will add an extra ten years and keep us from having to raise social security taxes. This is the only way out..."

Governor Barkley (D): "The Social Security System will not go bankrupt. Republicans have been saying that it will for years in order to get votes. This is the same fear tactic they use in every election cycle. They used it in the sixties, seventies, eighties and during every election. And here they are using it now. And look at what they've done. They haven't improved the system in the least. In fact, all they've done is to ram through raises in retirement age, leaving people to have to work longer and longer before they can retire. Seventy-two? My God, a lot of people will die before they collect money they've paid, that's theirs..."

Senator Barspool: "Neither of you are looking at this in the right way. Yes, I think Social Security is a great thing for people who need it. Think about what there was before Social

Security. How did people live? How did they retire? We need to look at the changes in our society and get us back to a culture of saving, of helping one another, of paying people enough money so they can not only live but save for the future. If I had to agree with either of you, I'd agree with the Governor. But you both look at this very shallowly. I'd lower the age to 62..."

President Grady: "What the Senator is saying is that he has no plan and no understanding of economics. Where would we get the money to allow people to retire early? We can't go back fifty or sixty or seventy years. Times have changed. We are working with a system that must be worked on right now, and under my administration, we have shored it up and are working on making that system healthier. And then, we have the Governor who denies the problems in the system, and if he is President, Social Security will die of negligence..."

Governor Barkley: "Besides raising the age of retirement again, making it harder for the most needy Americans to collect what is due them, the President has done nothing. Listen to him. He just said, he is working on ways to make the system healthier. He's already had four years to work on those changes, which means he hasn't done a thing. With him as President, we'll have more people dying than can ever collect. A very easy way to save money. Why not make the age 80? Or 85? And as for the Senator, what more can I say that I haven't said before? He is the one looking at society wrongly, through rose-colored glasses, wishing for an age decades ago that we cannot return to even if we wanted to..."

Senator Barspool: "(Laughs.) Neither of you understand the world we live in, and neither of you are listening. You're both answering questions about the present world from the point of view of 20th century politicians. You don't really understand what the question is that we need to ask. I'm saying that society has changed. Culture has changed. And those changes haven't been for the better. I'm not going to go through a long list of cultural problems right now. But let me say this: we have to shore up the American people more than we need to shore up our social security system. We don't need to make this country great. It already is. We need to ensure that our people are great..."

President Grady: "(Also laughs.). Right. Tell everyone to be nice to each other, and the problems are solved. Senator, I think you're the one who doesn't understand."

Senator Barspool: "Well, Mr. President, you can make the country as great as you like, but you're doing it on the backs of people who are not becoming great, who you have no regard for. What is your definition of a great United States?"

President Grady: "A great United States is a leader in the world, a country strong enough that no one will want to fight it. It promotes democracy and freedom not just here but around the world. Look at what we've done during my term, and you will see how we have helped to do just that. A great United States has a strong economy. It creates jobs. It provides good education, and my administration has made education better, as everyone knows. A great United States allows for freedom of belief and promotes values that have been handed down by God-fearing people throughout our country's history..."

Moderator interrupts: "Gentlemen, the question was about Social Security."

Senator Barspool: "That's what we're talking about. I don't think these two gentlemen get it, but many of the American people do. And more will."

Governor Barkley: "I do get it. I get two things. First, Senator Barspool puts every problem, whether it be Social Security, Defense, Terrorism, Criminal Justice or anything else into one category. Culture. He's one of two who don't get it. He suggests that by changing culture we solve problems. The government, however, is not and never has been in the business of legislating culture. And second, the President's real concern has little to do with people. He talks about military, democracy and freedom and only mentions the good of the people as a footnote. We need to make people first. Ensure that everyone can have a job and pay people enough to give them decent lives."

Senator Barspool: "Governor, you haven't really grappled with the issues. Domestic violence, poverty, crime. All the things that people are afraid of these days are just symptoms of something else. They can't be solved with jobs and high wages. I've said this many times, and you still can't understand. I respect your suggestions to help the people of this country. At least that's a move in the right direction and would be far better for the people than what the President can do. Raise the age of retirement, Mr. President? Is that how you serve the people? Your idea is like a 401k fund saying to the people who've put in the money, 'Sorry, but we have a new policy. No one collects until they're dead.' But you, Governor, and the President, neither of you understand the cause. I've given it to you many times, very clearly."

President Grady: "The government doesn't govern with philosophy and abstractions. The government looks at the real problems, the real issues. And then it tries to solve them in the way a government can solve them. I do know what you've said many times, but I will repeat what I've said many times. You cannot change the way of thinking of four hundred million people

overnight, in a month, in a year, or in a presidential term. You can't make everyone suddenly be nice to each other. You have to work with reality, Governor..."

Senator Barspool: "You just said it, Mr. President. The government looks at the real problems. But in this case, it doesn't see the real problems. What you don't see is that culture has changed. And that's the real problem."

President Grady: "But where's the *plan*, Senator. It's nice of you to point this out, but what are you going to do? Like I said before, you can't tell people to be nice to each other."

These were the basic positions of the three. Two had been heard before. One was truly revolutionary. The government needs to look at the cause of problems that people are concerned about and then deal with the cause, not the problems. The government seemed like a doctor treating symptoms but not the virus that produced them. Barspool's ideas seemed simplistic and unreasonable to the mainstream parties, but Senator Barspool made people listen. When he spoke, it sounded reasonable. But then again, when the others attacked him, they seemed reasonable as well, especially since Barspool really hadn't given as many details as supporters would have liked.

THE SEPTEMBER SPEECH: WHERE'S THE PLAN?

The turning point in the Senator's campaign, the September Speech, is already taught in schools. Two months before the election, Senator Barspool stood in front of the World War II Memorial in DC to give a speech that commentators later said would either lose him the election or make him a one-against-two candidate. That is, half for him, half for the other two. Historians generally agree that the Senator didn't speak eloquently. The content made it remarkable.

He chose the site to symbolize the culture of the Great Generation. They were soldiers who fought against a horrendous, demonic foe. They were common people who lived with rations and worked hard to keep the supplies going to the young men fighting across the Atlantic and the Pacific. They were young men separated from their parents and lovers, not knowing if they'd ever meet again. They were the parents, sick with worry that any day they'd receive bad news. And when the war was over, the country came together to work on building a great America.

He hadn't expected to go as far as he did in this speech, but he was increasingly sure that drastic measures were necessary, and he decided to bet his political career on an idea at once both repulsive and desirable. Until then, he wasn't sure himself about many of the answers to the problems of culture. Now he knew how to treat the real causes. As he stepped onto the stage, the wind blew his brown hair back out of his face. People in the crowd wanted to hear what this maverick would tell them, hoping he would be the one to come along at the right time and to really do something. His new slogan stood out in an arch high above him: "Are You Ready?"

Before he spoke, he stood at the podium, scanning the crowd from right to left and back again. Then again. He looked down at the podium, took some papers from it, crumpled them up into four balls and threw them into the audience. Oddly, no one tried to pick them up until a young boy ran over and crawled through some legs to snatch two of them. Then, all around began to stoop. Two lucky citizens got one each and immediately stuffed them into pockets to keep them safe. Some say this was planned, but Senator Barspool told reporters much later that he wanted to talk to people, not speak at them. He'd initially thought to give the discarded papers to an aide on stage but, almost as a superstitious ritual, threw the crumpled notes out into the crowd for good luck. If he had good luck, someone would be gaining a fortune, and if he didn't, they could be burnt to eliminate the bad luck they contained.

"My new slogan," he said, pointing to the banner above. "I hope you like it. It came to me suddenly a couple of nights ago as I was meditating on what we can do for the American people. My mind has been racing with ideas and doesn't want to make a pit stop."

"A couple of nights ago, I was thinking that it was inevitable that Christ would come," he stated. "The Judaism he knew, the religion of the time, was a religion of rules and laws. Whether it was him or another, someone was bound to stand up and question those laws. People must have good hearts, he said. They must love others as they love themselves. It could have happened earlier but didn't. If he hadn't gotten his message across, someone else would have. I'm not saying Judaism is wrong; I'm saying that the Christ had to come one day and tell people that following laws doesn't make people good. To him, many of the laws had become antiquated and didn't fit. They may have been good in the desert, for instance, but not for the people of that day. And, like I just said, following those laws doesn't make a person good."

"I feel the same way. Not that I'm a Christ. But I feel that what I say to the country now, whether you are ready or not, is inevitable. What matters is that you hear what will help this

country and our people. If I am elected, I will do my best. If I'm not, then someone else is certain to come along with the same message and make it work.”

He scanned the crowd again. Most people who were there say he looked worried. No one could pinpoint exactly why they thought so. A trembling in his voice? Some nervous mannerisms? None of that comes out in the video. Some have even said that it may have had something to do with his large ears. There's nothing to count against that idea.

“First of all, human nature hasn't changed. For decades... No, for a few centuries, people have talked about corruption on Capitol Hill. The people of this country are not number one in the minds of our legislators. Something else is, and that thing is money. The obstructionism and unwillingness to work together that we always see has nothing to do with ideology. It has everything to do with money. Republicans receive money from various interests. The Democrats receive them from others. I don't care what values these people say they have. They vote what they're paid to vote.”

He shifted feet. “Sounds like what hundreds of others have said, doesn't it? You're probably expecting a few more promises to just look into the matter now, promises that would be forgotten. Well, they won't be forgotten. Our government's first priority has got to be stopping the flow of money to our leaders. If that isn't fixed, very little will get done, as you've seen time and time again.

“So, my plan is this. The very first thing we must do -- and if you're ready I'll do this with you -- is to ensure that the people in our Congress and Senate are looking out for *your* interests. Like I said, people have talked about it for years, but no one has done anything about it. I've been told, partly correctly, that I have no plan. But now I do. A very detailed plan. Here's how we'll do it.”

At this point, he stepped up the pace and spoke more loudly. He didn't yell or bellow. But he spoke to the people in a voice that sounded more confident than when he'd started. “One. Government officials must be held to high standards. You'd have a hard time finding lower standards anywhere. They should be able to pass a simple test that includes Civics and History, Mathematics and Accounting, and some basic Logic. Unless they have an understanding of History and Civics, they cannot possibly be able to make good decisions on either foreign or domestic policy. History repeats itself because the people in power don't understand what was done and didn't work before.

“They need to know Mathematics and basic Accounting. They cannot, of course, prepare a good budget unless they can understand what all the numbers mean.

“And Logic. Of course. We can’t test them on common sense, but at least we can find out if they are able to do basic, logical reasoning.”

He paused briefly after each point, but the crowd remained silent.

“It’s time we set our standards higher for our leaders. They are the CEOs of this country. And there is more. Like many jobs require, and a lot of those are for low-ranking civil service work, our leaders must take occasional drug tests to be sure they really are thinking about the American people’s best interests and aren’t here to make money and revel in it.

“Furthermore, they must take an oath, something like the Hippocratic oath that doctors take, that says they will put the people of America first. They will not accept donations or presents. Basically, they will work only for the people and not for themselves.

“Finally, it will be illegal for lobbyists, companies, rich donors, or any other entity to give anything, and I mean anything, to members of the House and to Senators. And, of course, the President. Or to anyone related to them. Donations to campaigns will be limited and the money pooled among all the candidates. A company will be unable to put money into my candidacy, for instance, but into a general campaign fund. In that way, no person will be beholden to any company or organization and will vote in the people’s best interests not in the best interests of the companies or organizations.

“Okay. That’s first.”

He stopped to let his first idea sink in. What he saw frightened him. Several thousand faces looked back at him without a sound. He hunched his shoulders and raised his palms. “Well?” he asked. “What do you think?”

Members of the audience that day said they couldn’t believe what they were hearing. No one had ever done anything about the money in Washington. No one had pointed the finger and actually come up with a plan to rid Washington of corruption. Oh, candidates liked to say, “We’re going to take on the big money in DC,” but no one had ever *done* anything. No one had ever promised to change the system to this extent. And to add the drug tests and the knowledge tests was completely unexpected. They were dumbstruck.

“It can’t be done without your help,” he continued. “You have to demand this. You have to demand that your congressional representatives and Senators vote with me. If they aren’t willing

to do these few simple things – and they are very simple - don't vote for them. They are obviously part of the problem. I don't care what party they are. This can only be done if you demand it.” He stopped only a brief moment to look more closely at the faces. He thought this was an obvious answer to a multitude of problems. The Republicans and Democrats were polarized because of big money. This had to be done. But the crowd didn't seem to be reacting. “My question is, are you ready?”

The audience finally erupted in applause as if they suddenly realized that this wasn't just another promise to look into the matter. These were real, sensible steps. The Senator smiled and let the people clap. So far, so good. The Senator later said he expected this first part to go well, “but the second part was too revolutionary. It could only be done by an honest government. If I didn't think I could get that legislation through, I never would have attempted the rest.”

When the audience quieted, he thanked them. “This is what we've needed for a very, very, very long time.”

He loosened his tie and said, “Maybe I shouldn't have thrown that speech away so quickly.” A few people laughed. They were getting with him now. He knew he might be able to gain their support for more objectionable matters.

“As I've said many times, our culture has changed over the years. We lock ourselves into our homes and are afraid of shadows. We've been angry for years about corruption in government. Now, you and I have a chance to do something about it. We're also angry that we have to live in fear every day. We worry about people hurting our kids. About whether they can get a decent education. About racism and discrimination. About bullying. About losing our jobs. About whether the government will extend the retirement age yet again, as our President would like to do. We're worried about so many things that we weren't worried about fifty or sixty years ago. And we ask ourselves, what's happened to us? Why is there so much crime, so much violence? And why is it harder just to live?

“The fact is, there are many reasons for this change. Sixty years ago, you couldn't hear four-letter words on the radio and television. We didn't have games and portable devices that take up most of our time and isolate ourselves from our neighbors. Children didn't see the violence that they now see every day in movies, television and games. We had a more civil and polite society.

“I feel I’m not making sense. The point is that we live in fear, and we don’t know why. We wonder what’s happened to us. The fact is that we, as a society, have changed. Culture has changed. We’re becoming more divided and less civil. After months and years of trying to understand this, I’ve had a revelation that politicians cannot have unless they deeply care for the people.

“Both the President and Governor Barkley say we cannot legislate good citizenship. They say we can’t make laws to turn the clock back to a more civil society. They say this because they are politicians, the kind I once was. They can’t live without the money, and they’ve never thought about changing Washington. We *can* change society, and we will. But it won’t be easy. Again, if it doesn’t happen now, someone will come later to make this happen. It is the obvious answer. It is inevitable. We must and will do this, whether it’s this year or four years from now or eight years from now. Someone will come to make our society work again, and better than it ever has. Without discrimination. Without fear. Without sexism. Without the many falling behind while a few get astronomically ahead.

“It isn’t going to be better overnight. Today’s leaders are going to kick and scream, which is why we have to deal with them first. And that’s also why you have to be ready.

“I’m sorry. I’m feeling overwhelmed, almost embarrassed to talk like I am. That’s probably because no one has ever offered this plan before. I don’t know if anyone has seriously considered it. But you aren’t going to get it unless I say it, are you?”

Historians say he was rightly overwhelmed. If anyone had thought of his solutions before, they hadn’t spoken them or made them understandable. He could have been running right off a cliff rather than running for President.

“We live in what’s called a society. We are separate people, but we all have a stake in how well the whole does. Think of a less complicated society as an example. A pack of wolves. The wolves work together to take down prey and to get what they all need. In their society, if some of them don’t fulfill their roles, the whole pack suffers. In our society, the same thing happens.

“Society expects its members to fulfill their roles. The more people who don’t, the harder it is for the rest.

“Society also expects its members to take responsibility for their actions. Those who cannot be responsible must be taught to be responsible. Society cannot allow for unproductive or harmful members because these members hurt the whole. Society may allow, as it has for many

years, some members to deviate. But at some point, it must resist and purge itself. Not by violence but by education and training. Like a body healing itself, society must heal itself as well.

“Society must rid itself of the cancer of corrupt politicians by not allowing legal corruption.

“Society must rid itself of habitual criminals and the expense of keeping them in jails, where they are not productive and come out worse than what they were before. You can’t put people in small cells for years and expect them to somehow come out cured. It must either turn them into responsible members of the whole or be rid of them. Society expects responsibility. It cannot function properly when its members aren’t responsible.

“I’ve said many times that our culture has changed. It has bred more and more irresponsible members who take freedom for granted. When that number grows too large, society will ask for a dictator who will purge society for its responsible members and allow them to brush off the moral responsibility as the despot’s actions.

“We do not have to go there. But mark my words. If we continue to change culturally and become even more afraid and have more irresponsible members, the dictator will happen. People will vote for repression over compassion.

“I want to resist that terrible future. I want to bring about a more responsible and moral society, a society that can function well. A society in which all members can fulfill their obligations to the whole.

“Today, I will give you just a few examples of what I propose. Since I talked about crime and jails, let’s look at that first.

“Criminals were not born criminals. Most of them were made into criminals by circumstances – being born into poverty, having abusive parents, losing their jobs, and many other things. Now, our society has the tradition of trying a suspect and, if the suspect is guilty, putting the criminal in jail. Some get fines or probation, of course, depending on the severity of the crime.

“What does that mean to society? Society gets a cancer, you might say. Here are several million completely unproductive cells. Society has to take resources from somewhere healthy and divert those resources to feed the cancer.

“A dictator might eliminate the cancer. We, as people who are grateful and appreciate our liberty and freedom, are responsible for our actions and feel that life does have value. We want

the damaged cells to be cured. We want to find ways to make the cancer into normal cells again, productive cells. And barring that, we want the damaged cells to produce in isolation from all of us undamaged cells.

“In the case of the criminal, we must find other ways than jail. We know that jail helps no one. We want the criminal to become productive. Therefore, we put the criminal into a productive place, not into a small prison cell. My first inclination is to have the criminal become the protector. Form companies and battalions and brigades of these men to protect our country. Put them first into an extended basic training where they learn to be responsible. Those who pass then go on to do real work in a company of similar soldiers. They've learned the meaning of responsibility, patriotism and the gift of freedom and liberty. They become productive. And if we can turn even half of them into productive citizens, then we'll have made ourselves that much less afraid.”

At the Senator's pause, a bald man with a cane yelled out, “What about juvenile delinquents?”

The Senator waved at him and said, “Good question.

“You've hit a weak point. At least a point that's weak right now. I think there are various ways to treat young people. Teens go through periods of rebellion. It is important to remember that while they are in school, they are not productive except in making themselves into future productive and responsible citizens. I can't really lay out a one-size-fits-all policy. Some young people may need to be in military schools. Others in less strict boarding schools. Others, and probably the majority, need to be left alone to grow out of their normal rebellion. I would think that those who commit serious crimes or repeatedly commit crimes need to be educated where they will get the education they need. Those who are not being productive by fulfilling their roles to get a good education, those who disrupt classes or miss school very often, need our help.

“I've given a couple of examples now. Think about it. Society demands productivity and working together as a whole. It's time now to make sure that society can continue and that its members can continue to enjoy its many benefits and freedoms. We are grateful for our freedom, and we are tired of living in fear. But we must never become heartless, which would be immoral. We like to think of ourselves as God-loving people, and as such, we must reach out, find solutions that will help the unproductive become good members of society. We don't throw people away. We treat them with respect. If we must educate them in basic training or boarding

schools, we shall do so out of compassion for them and out of a need for a society that works well for all good people. We are not tyrants and must never become tyrants.

“Think about it. This will be a hard road. Politicians will fight back with all they've got. If you are with me, this is not just my fight. It is yours. So, ask yourselves. Are you with me?

“I hope you are. Love and blessings to you all.”

With that, he ended. Short. To the point. But almost completely unexpected.

The crowd? The crowd gave applause, but they weren't sure what to think as the Senator walked off-stage. They did stay there much longer than a crowd could be expected to stay. They wanted more. They wanted to be convinced. Many say they were spacing out, meditating or praying. There was an ominous quiet, and the crowd dispersed unwillingly. The speech had been short; but there was so much to think about.

Reporters with microphones and cameras followed the Senator, but he felt exhausted, he later said, and couldn't answer questions. His legs nearly failed him, and he took the arm of his campaign manager as they walked past the memorial to his waiting automobile. The first thing he said when inside was, “It's too early. For our country's sake, I just hope it's not too late.”

The news focused on the crowd's lack of enthusiasm.

The President immediately held a press conference to attack the Senator. Within a day, he attacked with ads calling the Senator a dictator. Only a dictator can think to take people, herd them into military camps or boarding schools, and force them to work. He likened him to Hitler, sending Germany's unwanted into concentration camps.

The President said that Washington wouldn't work without the lobbies. With lobbyists gone, who would be standing up for important causes such as pro-life, religion, animal rights and many more? His voice resonated with love for people, animals, and their rights. Lobbyists educate our leaders and help them to be aware of issues that are important to people. All these agencies and foundations, the President said, would find it very difficult to get time with Representatives and Senators. They wouldn't even be able to take them out for a hamburger without it being called treason. They wouldn't be able to buy a Senator a cola for crying out loud.

One of the President's ads began with this. “You're asleep,” A man is seen lying in bed next to his wife. “It's two in the morning. You hear the doorbell ring.” The man tries to break himself out of slumber. Once awake enough, he stumbles to the front door and looks out to see policemen at his doorstep. The camera zooms on his astonished face. He hears a voice from

outside the door. “Open up! We’re here for the children!” An announcer says, “Protect your family by re-electing President Grady.”

Governor Barkley attacked the speech only once. He may have realized that giving the Senator too much time would only strengthen his support. “There’s too much opportunity for abuse,” he said.

ON TO THE ELECTION

Two days after the September Speech, the Senator came out of hiding and held a press conference. “You see,” he said, “the President is doing exactly as I predicted. Lifetime politicians like him will be kicking and screaming. They don’t want to lose all that money they’re used to. They don’t want to think about a life without Wall Street money, big energy money, tobacco money and all the rest. He says that pro-life, religious and animal rights lobbyists won’t be able to get their messages across, but that’s completely absurd. If our leaders are really interested in those causes, they will do something about them. Likewise, if they are really interested in the causes of Wall Street, energy, tobacco and all the rest, then they’ll vote their consciences on them. But we have to give them the chance to vote their consciences, and that means taking away the money.”

“Senator, what about police officers going to homes to take away children?”

“It will be pretty much the same as now. Families that abuse their children, or neglect them, already have their children placed in the custody of the State. Children who commit crimes are already taken to juvenile facilities. No one is crying out about that now because no politicians are in jeopardy of losing their money and power. The difference between now and what I propose is that instead of sending them to foster homes or elsewhere, we give children help. Now, we put them somewhere period. We don’t have a plan for making them into good citizens. With my plan, we educate them to eschew violence and drugs, to have a positive work ethic, to understand that education and learning are not something one has to do for a certain amount of time but that they can find what it is they like and enjoy learning about it. We want them to learn to have discipline in their lives, something which many of them have been unable to find. These things and more will give them the tools they need to be productive. Sending them to juvenile

facilities that cannot do these things is a shame. Let's think about each life and each person and do what's best for them. That will be what is best for society."

He didn't stop to allow another question. "And to your next question about prisoners. It's the same thing. We spend over fifty thousand per year to incarcerate each prisoner. We're going to be more humane and give them the opportunity to become productive members of society. Some will. Some won't. But we will have much more success than leaving them in cells where they become angrier at society than they were when they went in."

"What other groups of people do you see being affected by your plan?" asked another reporter.

"Chronically dependent families. Families that place no emphasis on education and so their children also become dependent on food stamps, welfare, medicare and the like. If we are to continue to pay for such programs – and I think they are important – we must at least expect that our society will benefit from them. Put people to work. Expect them to make progress toward becoming independent. Having families who for generations have been dependent is unacceptable to society.

"If a student gets a scholarship, we expect that that child's grades remain at a minimum level. We have to expect dependent families' children to meet a requirement. If they can't, then we should have the right to assess the situation and see if the family has neglected their children's educational needs. If they are negligent, they've ruined the futures of their children."

The reporter added, "Doesn't that seem harsh?"

"Not at all," the Senator answered. "Look, if we spend money on someone who wants to go to college under the ROTC program, we expect that person to give us several years of military service. When we pay a dependent family, we have to expect for some payback of that money. For instance, they raise children who become productive. Society doesn't like people to receive things they don't pay for."

"So, is there anyone who can receive but not produce?"

"Sure. The disabled. The mentally ill who can't work. Senior citizens. There are more. We don't have to feel bad about helping them when they are clearly unable to work or if they have paid their dues already. And we should be able to give them decent lives."

"The beauty of this plan is that more people will be productive. Many who are unproductive now will be productive. The more that are productive, the more money that will be

moving around to build a stronger economy. And, of course, the less money that each person has to spend in taxes.”

“And the rich?”

“No one deserves to be a billionaire or trillionaire. When is enough enough? These people just want more and more. Why? It’s just plain greed. They don’t need more. And remember, the money they make has to come from somewhere. It basically comes from taxpaying citizens. It works its way from the bottom toward the top, keeping the poor poor and reducing the numbers of the middle class. The rich will pay under my presidency. And that includes me.

“We cannot afford to continue the trickle up effect, which is what the President proposes. Cutting taxes on the rich doesn’t send money to the bottom but to the top. People like the President who promote this idea want you to think they have good intentions. Forget it. They are voting for the money they’ve received from wealthy individuals, businesses, Wall Street and the like. And they absolutely know it’s a trickle-up effect. Believe me. I’ve been a Senator for awhile now.”

“Senator, why is it that many politicians want to give the wealthy tax breaks? There must be something to that if so many believe it’s the best way.”

“Sure. I just answered it, but sure. There’s something to that all right. Greed. Wealthy leaders don’t want to pay higher taxes. Money from the dear, departed Koch brothers went into the pockets of our leaders. Money from other rich people line the pockets of our leaders now. We can’t expect them to vote their consciences or to vote for what’s best for the American people if they are beholden to the rich.

“Look at it this way. The people who’ve been in politics are those with motivation to make money. Many are narcissists. They say they care about the people, but they don’t. They care about number one, and they’ll say they’re Christians or Hispanics or whatever they need to be to get the vote. Then, when they’re elected, they have to pay back whoever donated to their campaigns. And they don’t mind doing that.

“Our country, however, is at a crossroads. Our society can’t be healthy under these circumstances. You might say that if Washington is the brain of the nation, then our country is mentally ill.”

The evening news everywhere took that last statement as their headlines. “Barspool Says Washington Mentally Ill.” Television and radio news pundits called the Senator’s ideas

unrealistic. Even the most idealistic politicians wouldn't run on such a platform. But in this case, there was something different. The Senator had a plan; a very detailed plan. Political analysts generally agreed that it wouldn't work but that it hadn't ever been proposed before. The people, however, took another view. They began to understand the simplicity and the genius of what he had to say.

The President and some candidates for Congress and Senate called Barspool racist. Wisconsin Senator Blas even called him a Nazi, saying he wanted to create a super-educated, hard-working country of people. The Senator merely replied, "Well, there's the kicking and screaming I told you about. Their accusations merely show the corruption in our government. I haven't talked about race at all. Get this straight. There is no place in our society for discrimination and racism. Unless all parts work together, the whole cannot be healthy."

A week later. Maryland Governor Barkley was campaigning in California, and except for his comment about too much chance for abuse, he held his tongue. Just after that comment, his aides advised him not to say a thing. His campaign manager, Devrim Bayam, and some other aides listened to all the recordings of the Senator's speeches and interviews repeatedly, listening for an opening into the debate. Their caution paid off in the end. The Senator was moving up in the polls, but his new support was mostly at the President's expense. Governor Barkley's results hadn't changed. Corruption in Washington was becoming the main talking point. That and a healthy society.

The Governor and three aides were spending the evening brainstorming in a hotel suite. "Look," Bayam said, "we don't know if this will continue or not. We've got some decisions to make. The campaign started with talk about economic inequality, immigration, the environment and all the same topics everyone's been talking about for years. We know we have better ways to solve these problems than the President. So we can keep talking about them and giving our point of view for those who care..."

The Governor wagged a finger at him. "That's the point, Devrim. For those who care. I'm getting the feeling that Senator Barspool is the change that people have been waiting for. A new Messiah. Someone who doesn't just pay lip-service to changing Washington but tells them just how he'll do it. I look like a blind man. Why didn't I think of this?"

"You're not Washington establishment, Governor."

“The easy answer is that I could have done it at the State level. Okay. So what are all these other options you’ve been thinking of?” the Governor asked with a bit of a scowl.

“Get into it yourself, but give it your own twist. People are saying...”

“What people? And what’s my *twist*? ”

“News people. Pundits. Commentators. Radio hosts. Many of them are saying that he’s unrealistic. It can’t work. Congress isn’t going to vote against the status quo. So what remains then of what he thinks on other issues? He was barely holding his own on them until this. You can bring some realism into the discussion.”

The Governor took several deep breaths, blowing out hard each time. “The problem is, I think he’s right.”

“Come on.”

“No, Devrim. He’s right. Think of the change if members of Congress and Senators suddenly began voting according to what they really thought was right rather than what they were paid to vote for. I don’t think you’d see nearly the obstructionism you do now. You’d get more bills that are actually meant to help people and improve the economy. There could actually be discussion about the best ways to deal with problems.”

“Governor. They’ll find ways around it.”

“Not with this man’s plans. He wants change. Real change. Taking gifts, money or anything else will be treason.”

“Is it?”

“In his view it is, and he has a good point. Elected officials are getting paid by the people to run the country well, but the officials are actually working for big corporations, Wall Street, rich individuals and so on. So where am I supposed to differ with him? What better plan can I come up with? How can I attack him on this?”

“A progressive change.”

“You mean a gradual change. That’ll never fly. Okay, I say, we’ll do the History test this year but they can still accept contributions. No, no. People want change now. So let’s expect this issue to be a major issue in this campaign. Maybe the major issue. I’d have to agree with him, and then where’s that leave me? I’m a follower, not a leader. So let’s leave it at that and go on to his other ideas for a moment.

“Once the Congress is changed, once they start working on what will help the American people, he wants to provide ways for people to become productive – people the two parties have written off for years. The Republicans pander to the rich and fool their constituents into thinking they’re religious. We Democrats pour money into the problem; but the poor, criminals, drug addicts and others have their own problems – cultures that continue to produce more poor, criminals and addicts. We’re the party that cares, but for all our caring, we can’t get people out of their downward spirals. He’s right about that too. We have to find ways to make people productive. When they are productive and they understand that education and work are to their benefit, we’ll have gone a long way to solving the problems...”

“Governor, you’re not saying what I think you are.”

The Governor looked down at a drink on the coffee table. Carbonated water with a lemon wedge. He picked it up, walked into the bathroom and poured it into the sink. He came out and took a beer from the minibar. “Somebody get some Sam Adams in here,” he said.

He was in a mood. No one talked. “Come on,” he said loudly. “Who has some ideas?” He paced in a circle around the three others there.

Betty Miller, who took care of collecting data for the campaign, had her arm slung over the back of her chair, not really a pose that represented the anxiety in the room. “Governor, there’s only six weeks or so until the election. This isn’t something you’ll want to hear, but suppose you continue with your plans and ideas for another week and see where the polls are then.”

Devrim said, “No. We don’t have a week. We have to come out with something better or...”

The Governor looked at him angrily. “You said waiting was an option.”

“Well, it is an option. Just not a good one.”

Betty sat forward. “Governor. Here’s an option. Call the Senator. Meet with him. Sit down and discuss his ideas and your ideas. We make sure you get the press for initiating the get together, and people think of you as a man of integrity who also wants to change Washington. It brings you onto equal footing with him on that issue, or at least puts you in the news regarding this issue. The President’s gone the other way and is losing. You can look honest and reliable. A negotiator. Okay, it’s just an idea.”

“It’s called brainstorming,” the Governor said. He paced once more around the room. “It’s an idea. Yes. I think I like it,” he said as if talking to himself. In the same distant voice, he added, “Does anyone know how to get in touch with him?”

"I do," Betty answered. "I can get him on the phone."

"Okay. Let's do it," he told her.

Governor Barkley could have just waited a week, but his intuition was correct. He'd have been lower in the polls. He had to stop the slide somehow, but he couldn't look like a same-old-same-old politician while doing it. The President was trying it and dropping dramatically, even though there was a large group of voters who would vote party line no matter what. Barspool had the fortune to be an Independent, able to take voters from both sides.

Betty finally got the Senator on the phone, and Barkley took it up right away. "Senator. How are you?"

"A bit surprised to get a call from you, Governor Barkley, but I'm fine nonetheless."

"Of course you're wondering why I'd call. What I'd like to do, Senator, is to get a chance to sit down and talk with you. We're both in California now, I think. Would you honor me with allowing me to visit you, at your convenience, of course."

Barspool laughed. "I'm not sure if that would look good for you or bad for you. What do you have in mind?"

As was his custom, Barkley paced as he talked. "Well, Senator, good or bad... I don't know either. I know it sounds like a political ploy, but what I want is to just sit down with you, without cameras or mikes, nothing recorded, and talk about some of your ideas..."

"You'd like to change my mind?"

"No sir. I want to meet you, like nearly half the population wants to meet you. I want to sit down with you and talk. That's all. There's nothing in it for me except a chance to learn."

"Governor," Barspool said. "Governor, I don't think you have anything to lose by doing so. If you want to talk, I think we can work something out. But there will be some conditions that I'd expect you to follow."

"Anything," replied Barkley.

"Like you said, you just want to sit down and talk. So, you will not record the meeting in any way. Also, there will be no news coverage of the event before, during or after it. That means that..."

"No one can know about it." The Governor had thought about that but didn't expect it.

"Right. The point is that it will be completely secret and that you will have no recording of our conversation. Oh, and that just the two of us meet. I don't want witnesses to talk later."

Barkley turned the corner around a sofa. “But you might?”

“Record it? I might, just to protect myself. But I won’t use it unless you force me to by making this public. Or unless I have your approval.”

“Senator, this conversation. Are you recording it now?”

“Of course,” Barspool answered. “As you are.”

“Where are you?”

“San Francisco. I’m surprised you didn’t know. I believe you’re here too.”

“Someone found you for me and got you on the phone. How about early tomorrow morning?”

“No,” Barspool said. “I have events all day. The only time we can meet would be tonight.”

“But sir, it’s already late.”

“Well, then maybe we’ll cross paths another time.”

Barkley sighed loudly. “Okay. Tonight. Wherever you are, I’m sure I can be there within an hour.”

When the conversation ended, Bayam said, “Sir, you’re not going to get any publicity out of this.”

The Governor stopped walking and looked him in the eye. “So come up with some other ideas while I talk with the Senator. Now, I need someone to get me to his hotel room without anyone knowing I’m there.”

No one knows what happened when the two men met. Both were intelligent men who could have passed the new civil service test without study. And the drug tests. We do know that they had a very cordial talk because the two became quite close friends and supporters. It’s often said that Governor Barkley wanted to drop out of the race after this, but he hung on. He would have had the entire Democratic Party to contend with if he’d quit. However, he spent much of the remaining weeks just antagonizing the President.

In the final debate, he took the President to task repeatedly. “You, sir, are the reason nothing gets done in Washington. What you have done in this campaign and what you stand for are only what can be expected from a rich politician who is in office mainly to line his pockets. The American people want change. They want their leaders to be honest and to stand up for the ideals of the people they represent. And yet, you rail against Senator Barspool’s suggestion that we make it impossible for our leaders to vote where the money is. You’re promoting those same

old policies of tax breaks for the rich, and that's because your money comes from the rich. You aren't thinking of the people. You, sir, are thinking of yourself. Fortunately, however, you will not be President for one more term. The only people who will vote for you are the rich and those who've never cast a ballot for anyone but a Republican no matter how good the opposition is.

We the people don't want your same-old politics."

When the President shouted, "You aren't the one who came up with the idea of Washington reform!" the Governor answered calmly, "I admit that I didn't think of the Senator's policies and ideas. I should have. My aides keep telling me that it's because I'm not a Washington insider. I don't take much comfort from that. I agree with the Senator. Unless we make rapid and very drastic changes to the way Washington runs, we may end up with that dictator that Senator Barspool tells us could come about. People are afraid, and when the people are afraid, there is no telling what they will vote for to gain the security they want. You, sir, are making that a possibility.

The election went as you might expect. The President only managed 22% of the vote. Governor Barkley was well ahead of him at 35%, not a bad showing to Senator Barspool's 43%. But Barspool took the electoral vote easily and immediately promised to try to rid the country of that antiquated system. He also came up with his idea of not allowing the prediction of voting results in the East when voting in the West hadn't even closed yet.

Many of the Congressional and Senate races were determined by who promised to reform Washington and who promised to follow the status quo. The reformers won overwhelmingly. The new President could still have a tough time instituting his reforms, but the will of the people was there. Barspool continued his campaigning after the election with speeches here and there across the country, and thousands of people went out to see him. He'd become a celebrity, as did Governor Barkley who helped create the new party. The People's Party.

It took a year and a lot of *kicking and screaming* to pass legislation on Washington reform. The new President made it his priority and relentlessly took his case to the public. With campaigning starting again for the 2030 elections, members of Congress and the Senate saw the writing on the wall. Follow along or get voted out.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Brad Graff robbed a Burger King of a Whopper in a small Southern Oregon town. He hadn't been in and out of jail except a night or two now and then, but he'd been a headache to the community for years. Disturbing the peace. Public nudity. A few small drug convictions for which he got probation, rehab and community service. This time the judge didn't look so kindly on Brad and sentenced him to two years, which meant a stint in the new basic training.

He was transferred to a new camp in Montana that the *recruits* themselves were developing. Camp Sherman already had barracks and other buildings, but the training grounds, marching grounds, roads and all the other things a camp needed were the responsibility of the recruits: one way to make them productive. For the first twelve weeks, Brad underwent basic training to give him discipline and a sense of camaraderie with the others. He marched for miles every day, dropped and gave the drill sergeant fifty any number of times, exercised, learned to read maps, experienced tear gas and attended lectures among other things.

"Left! Left! Left right left!" the drill sergeants called out as they marched. "That's *my* left, Recruit! Not yours!"

"I want to help the little old ladies,
Feed the poor and hug some babies.
I want to rid the world of crime,
Make life safe for yours and mine."

"I want to build a happy life,
With my husband or my wife.
I'll be sure that you are fine.
You get yours and I get mine."

Of course, Brad didn't want to help old ladies, feed the poor and all the rest of what he had to shout out in the cadence. That was part of his problem. So he attended classes daily to help him understand how society works, why he was there, and how he could become a useful member of his society. Some other recruits hadn't gotten that far. They were in their 15th or 18th weeks of basic training, taking anger management classes and junior high level Math and English. Some not that high.

Cameras and microphones were by then small enough that a million of them could be in use without anyone knowing. The recruits were watched and listened to constantly. Computers could understand numerous languages and would inform drill sergeants of recruits who weren't getting the message.

During his 12th week, Brad was caught talking with another recruit by one of the computers.
“Oh, man,” Brad whispered to the other recruit. “This really sucks. I gotta get outta here.”
“You and me both. Sometimes I want to just bash one of those drill sergeants over the head.”
“I swear every morning that I’m gonna do it. I know I am. I hate all this fucking bullshit about helping people and being a good member of society. When I get out, I’m gonna be smarter. I’m just not gonna be caught, that’s all.”

He never knew why he was given the extra two months of basic training. All he knew was that he was still there and had probably forgotten how long he’d been there anyway. By the end, however, he was talking about seeing his wife and regretted that he’d done something as stupid as trying to steal a Whopper. “This is way better than jail anyway, but I’d rather be out doing something. After this, I think I’d be happy to have a job. If I could live on the wages anyway.”

Even though he’d had to spend those extra months, or perhaps because of them, Brad had changed. He’d lost 20 pounds. He was definitely clean of drugs and alcohol. The change in his body made him calmer. He thought more clearly, his ability to concentrate had improved, and he was more disciplined. He was promoted to Private 2 and put on a construction job where the recruits had it easier. The sergeants didn’t yell so much, and the recruits weren’t constantly marching around. But even on these jobs, the recruits had regimented and disciplined lives. They got up in the morning at six, made their beds, fell out for role call, went to the mess hall for breakfast, fell back in, marched to the site, and worked all day. At lunchtime and at dinner, they fell out for role call and marched to the mess hall. After work, they had classes and some free time. It was just what most of the recruits needed. Those who couldn’t make it in one of these *cushy* jobs would be sent back to more basic training. That rarely happened. The computers and drill sergeants were too good at spotting problems before the guys got their taste of *freedom*.

In rare cases, a recruit would be considered unable to become a productive member of society. That rarely happened at Camp Sherman. It was more likely to happen at camps where the men had committed more violent crimes and had been members of gangs or hate groups. In those first years, they were sent back to prisons with the understanding that if they were good

prisoners, they'd have a chance to go back to basic training. A few were found mentally ill and sent to other facilities for help.

Today, of course, a lot of that is unnecessary. Some people criticize today's program as a modern day version of the Moonies' and Hari Krishna's weekend retreats, when a person would be brainwashed into joining the cult after just a weekend and would give all their money to the religious group. Most don't care about the method. There's no torture. What they care about is that it works, and it does in most cases.

When Brad was paroled, he already had a job which was found for him. He'd gained considerable skill and a liking for operating heavy equipment. He moved back to his hometown and made a wage that he could definitely live on. Gone were the days when a prisoner would be set free to have to find his own way and frequently report to a parole officer. The employer was given a tax break that was barely worth the effort of weekly reports to the parole board, but it helped get recruits hired. Unless the reports indicated something amiss, parole officers only occasionally checked on the released criminal, and when they did, they were able to check more thoroughly by going out to see the workplace or the home. Parole officers didn't have time to sit in offices.

Brad's employer, Elayne Griffin, started to have some worries about Brad after he'd been with the company for about six months. Officer Thorpe went out to the site to have a chat with Brad. When he got there, Brad was working a huge shovel and was nearly ready for his break. Thorpe walked across a large area of gravel and yelled. "Brad! Brad!"

Brad didn't hear the shouting but happened to see the officer out of the corner of his eye. He shut the shovel down and climbed off. "Officer Thorpe! Hey, how are you? It's been awhile."

"I'm all right, Brad. I just came by to see how you're doing. How is everything?"

"Great. I've got a good job here."

"You like what you're doing?"

"Sure," Brad said honestly. "I learned this in camp and liked it. It beats all those other crappy jobs I used to get. And it pays well."

At the same time, two other officers and a dog were in Brad's apartment, checking for drugs, guns and anything a guy like Brad wouldn't be able to afford. He was living alone then, his wife

having divorced him while he was away. These days, we don't use dogs, of course; but at that time, dogs were essential for sniffing out drugs and guns.

"Let's go somewhere we can talk," the officer said. Because Thorpe wanted to get out of the sun, he suggested a spare room in the office, a temporary metal building with the inside made into a passable working space with separate rooms.

Once there, Officer Thorpe reached into his pocket and said, "Well, let's get this part over with anyway so we can talk." He pulled out a swab and handed it to Brad who wiped it in his mouth and handed it back.

Thorpe rubbed the swab on what looked like a memo pad. "Brad. Come on."

"It was just that once, Officer."

"Gee," Thorpe said, looking Brad in the eyes. "I thought you were doing really well out here. That's why I haven't been out for a month." He looked down again. "Looks like more than once to me."

Brad's cheeks puffed as he blew out air. "Oh, man. Does this mean I'm going back to camp?"

Officer Thorpe had a heart. He didn't want to send Brad to camp for a slip up, but he also had a job to do. "That depends, Brad. You know the procedure. I have to know who sold it to you."

"Look," Brad said. He leaned forward and put his elbows on the desk in front of him. "It was just a mistake. I like it here. I'm doing really well. You can check me every week from now on if you want. Every day. I don't care."

Thorpe sat back. He took out a small book and doodled on it. "Okay, Brad. I do need to know where you got it."

Brad's eyes lit up. "You mean, you're not sending me back to camp?"

"I didn't say that. I'm not heartless, Brad, but you've violated your parole. I need you to cooperate if I'm going to be able to help you out. Otherwise, I don't have a choice. You know that."

Brad sat back again and looked at the floor for awhile. "Okay. The guy's name is Frankie. I don't know his last name. He's always at his house on Spring Street."

"How do I get there?"

“You know where I live. Just go to Spring Street, make a right. It’s a blue house on the right. Maybe the third or fourth one down.”

“His last name?”

“No idea, Officer. Really. I wish I knew.”

“Okay, we need a unit at Spring Street,” Thorpe said, and the computer relayed the message to headquarters. “Just wait here,” Thorpe said. He went out and talked to Elayne, who put another worker on Brad’s shovel. Then he got Brad. The two talked all the while they drove downtown.

Meanwhile, the search at Brad’s house had ended. Just the smell of where the drug had been but nothing else out of the ordinary.

With Brad unable to contact Frankie, three officers were safe to go to the Spring Street location without the residents’ knowledge. They pulled up quietly in an unmarked car and walked to the door. From the outside, it looked almost like any other house on the block. Just a bit more run-down. The lawn needed mowing, and the paint on the house was old. It could use some work but not much.

Three officers went to the door. They heard children crying inside and waited for an answer. Officer Keith Jackson said, “Mary, you go around back. Jojo, stay with me. If there’s no answer in one minute, we’re going in the front.”

Jojo looked at his watch. Keith knocked again but got no answer. The two pulled out their neutralizers. He knocked again. The minute up, Jojo turned the unlocked knob and both stood to sides as he pushed the door open. Jojo’s handheld camera told them there were only two children in the room. It took a few seconds for their eyes to adjust to the dark inside, which scared Jojo and excited Keith. “No one move!” Jojo yelled.

But there in the living room were just those two toddlers in diapers crying, hugging each other and looking at the door.

The officers stepped in. “We’re police. Is there anyone else here?”

The children continued crying and made no effort to answer.

“We’re not going to hurt you,” Keith said. His cameras were taking images all around him. If someone came up behind, he’d be warned.

The living room was a living room. Nothing remarkable except that it hadn’t been cleaned for weeks. The officers felt the dust and dirt under their feet as they walked through into a

hallway where all four doors were already opened. Jojo held a camera in front of each to determine if there was anything alive before they went in. They were all unoccupied. Three were bedrooms with unmade beds and with clothes and an assortment of things littered on the floors. The fourth was a filthy restroom. The toilet leaked loudly and the sink dripped.

“Which one is your room, kids?” Jojo asked.

The boy pointed.

“Where’s your toys?”

Still no answer from the children.

They came out from the hall and looked into a dining room and then a kitchen where the dishes hadn’t been washed for several days. They peeked into a cluttered garage. Keith looked out the back door and called Mary in. “We need a dog,” he said when she got there. It would be on the way.

Mary knelt to talk with the kids. “Well, hi. I’m Mary. Who are you?”

Neither child answered.

She smelled that neither of the children had been washed or changed recently. “What’s your name, Sweetie?” she asked, reaching out to touch the girl’s arm.

The girl took a step back.

“I’m not going to hurt you. Listen, you can call me Mary, okay?”

“Isaac,” the little boy said.

Mary smiled. “That’s a nice name, Isaac. I like it. What’s your sister’s name?”

“Patty,” the boy answered.

“Isaac and Patty. Both nice names. I think we can be friends. And let’s get Children’s Services out here.” They’d soon be on the way.

Keith told Mary to stay with the kids. “We’ll be out front in case someone comes home.”

Ten minutes later, the dog came in and immediately went to a closet in one of the bedrooms. The officer with him found several pounds of a variety of drugs stashed in a hiding place there. Children’s Services came and left with the bawling Isaac and Patty. The dog found an assortment of paraphernalia throughout the house. And left. A woman who looked ready to step onto a model’s runway went to the door, followed by Jojo and Keith, who took her inside and confiscated \$8,000 in used hundreds from her. Another unmarked car came and took her away. Keith let Mary off, and those two remaining officers waited outside in the car.

They waited another three hours for Frankie and his wife, Velma, to get home. Drunk. Frankie told the most amazing story about how he had no idea how those drugs got into his house. He and Vel never used them, of course. Vel pleaded with the officers to find the real criminal.

Barspool's Civil Society had changed the way the government dealt with drug offenders. Instead of prison terms, which tended to target darker-skinned people, users were given several opportunities and ways of quitting and staying clean. For addicts, penalties started with detox and rehab. Judges imposed increasingly strict penalties to repeat offenders. When an habitual addict reached the point of daily meetings and weekend camps every week, the addict was a step away from harsher rehabilitation in camp.

Drug dealers, however, immediately faced a stint in camp. Frankie and Velma knew what they were up against. They also knew they'd probably never see their children again.

A small opposition claimed the penalties too severe. All of this for a mistake! Losing one's children was preposterous! The majority of the American people, however, were tired of leniency that brought about generations of families with drug problems. Or dependency problems. Or abuse problems. It's often said there's no rule book for parenthood, but the government's Civil Society set some basic standards for parenthood. No child should have to live in fear of abuse, be subjected to drugs or to have his or her life limited by not having the right to loving parents and a good education.

The Civil Society took the Department of Children's Services very seriously. DCS had the responsibility of taking care of children who, for no fault of their own, had been dealt bad hands. Many had been neglected or abused. Some were there because their parents had been arrested and sent to camps. These were future members of society who the Civil Society didn't want to fall through the cracks. Unlike what President Barspool had said, there were more children taken from their parents than had been taken previously, but the number hadn't increased greatly. The system worked much like it had. When children were abused or neglected, they became wards of the State.

Glenn Hardley had been with Isaac and Patty from their arrival at DCS. He bathed them and changed them. He fed them. He played with them, or tried to. Most of the children would at least talk to him, but Glenn found Isaac and Patty to be a particularly difficult case. They'd speak one or two words now and then, but they rarely spoke, which made it difficult for Glenn to

assess their intellectual and emotional conditions. Patty was just two, still quite young, but Isaac was three and his language clearly delayed.

Glenn tried to get them interested in toys. The children looked at them and sometimes took ahold of them if asked to, but they had no interest. Judging from the absence of toys at their home, Glenn supposed they were seeing these things for the first time. They wouldn't even hug teddy bears or other stuffed animals.

After two days, Glenn was able to pick up Isaac, hold him on his lap and talk to him; although Isaac wouldn't talk back. Glenn couldn't understand why he could pick up the elder rather than the younger. A medical examination had fortunately not found any sexual abuse. What could be different about Patty? His best guess at the time was that she'd been touched inappropriately or scolded too often. Or just been neglected too much.

After a couple of days, the situation improved when he was able to take the children outside. The DCS facility had huge grounds with lawns, walkways, ponds with fish, and even a petting zoo. For older kids, there were areas for many sports activities. Isaac and Patty stepped out into this new world of nature with wide eyes. Glenn couldn't help but laugh when he saw their faces. Isaac stuck out his lips, making them into a perfect little "o" as if he was going to whistle a happy tune.

"Yes!" Patty said, pointing to a white daisy, bright with the sun. Both of the children looked at it from a distance.

Glenn reached out and moved it slowly toward them. "Smell it," he said. "It smells really good."

They'd have none of that, but Glenn persisted. He knelt down and smelled it himself. "Mmmm! That's nice!"

Isaac, the bold one, hesitantly gave it a try, moving his face toward it in fits and starts. "Oh!" he exclaimed when he finally caught the aroma. "Patty!"

That was just about the first verbal interaction Glenn had seen with the kids. And things just got better. Patty smelled it, too, and loved it. The two had probably never been outside and were finding a world outside the dark, dusty house they'd been confined to. Glenn didn't know whether to laugh or cry; laugh because the children looked so funny finding delight in something all kids should have experienced already or cry for their months of complete neglect and lack of stimulation. Isaac looked up into Glenn's smiling face and saw a tear drooling down his cheek.

He tried to smell it. Glenn reached out and pulled the two close to him, and they, perhaps a bit unwillingly, obliged.

Later, they saw fish and birds in the trees. They went to the petting zoo but were afraid to enter. When they returned to the building, Patty took a teddy bear and dragged it around by its arm.

A few days later, Glenn introduced the children to another pair of children of the same ages. Isaac and Patty were each something like a dog raised in isolation from other dogs, one that didn't know dog body language. They couldn't tell what the other children meant, and the other children didn't understand them. Within three days, however, Isaac and Patty understood much better and learned the basics of playing with balls, stuffed animals and running on the grass.

Thereafter, they woke up alert and happy in the mornings and cheerfully ate their breakfasts. They looked forward to each coming day, and although their language abilities were woefully lacking, they were young enough to catch up.

Glenn introduced the two for half-days to the boarding school they'd be going to. The children tired of those few hours quickly, but they soon wanted to be there despite their exhaustion to meet the others for play. Patty very naturally took to painting. She brushed strange, indescribable shapes on paper, but the teachers said her choices of colors was amazingly good and encouraged her to enjoy herself. Isaac enjoyed moving toy cars and trains over the ground and was intrigued when other children would make the cars and trains crash into each other.

When the children moved to the boarding school full-time, Glenn felt as if he'd lost his own children. In just a few short weeks, he'd seen them grow up from practically infants who knew almost nothing to nearly full-fledged children who could socialize and learn. They'd learned to speak in longer sentences. They knew more words. When it came time to say goodbye, Isaac hugged him and said, "I like Glenn." Of course, Glenn did visit them now and then every week, and the children were happy to see him. They just didn't need him anymore like they had. He'd introduced them to a new world that they became comfortable in. There were new Glenns, and there was far more stimulation and novelty.

Glenn didn't go home after work on the day he said goodbye to Isaac and Patty. Most of the children he'd helped had touched him emotionally, but Isaac and Patty got deep down into his soul. His mind raced. One instant, he'd remember first seeing them. The next, the daisy. The

next, Patty with a teddy bear. Then the pictures she painted. (He had one on his wall in the office.) He imagined their home. Their futures. Isaac saying, "I like Glenn." His mind wasn't going to turn off.

He went to dinner with a friend, Ai, another helper at the DCS and told her about the kids. "You're lucky," she said, "to take care of the younger ones. They're more pliable and resilient than the ones who've suffered longer. The junior high aged kids are really a mess."

They sat next to each other at a table in a small Italian restaurant that Glenn frequented. He took her hand and said, "I know. I am fortunate. How long do you think it will be before we don't have so many older kids to deal with?"

"Well, Glenn, we'll probably never be able to catch all the younger ones. And some of the older ones don't have problems until they get older. From what I've read, we should have about half the number we have now in four to six years. That will decline to about a quarter four years later. And there won't be as many cases of neglect and abuse. There will be more problem kids. Ones who habitually do the wrong thing. I don't need to tell you, I know, but it's the ones who by temperament or something in their upbringing or any number of things that have contributed to their making wrong decisions. We're not talking about the normal rebellion that kids go through. Only the ones who go too far and commit crimes."

"You know, Ai, the police have cameras and computers they can use. If we had those cameras everywhere, we'd pick up on a lot more anti-social activity."

"People don't want that, Glenn. I don't. I don't want to feel like I'm being watched everywhere I go, do you? I mean, it's bad enough that everybody has cameras at their homes. It's gotten to the point where if a crime is committed, the police can probably see it anyway by just looking at somebody's security system. I think our freedom is at stake, or would be, if we let the government put cameras everywhere."

"The Civil Society could use them," Glenn pointed out. "For good things. It's a great thing. We change people's lives. Look at those two little kids I just took care of. They're young enough so they probably won't remember what's happened to them. They can grow up to have good lives. They'll get through school, maybe go to college, enjoy their lives. If there were cameras, they'd have been found earlier."

Ai gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Glenn, I know you have good intentions, but the Civil Society doesn't mean watching everyone like 1984. With technology changing so quickly, we

could easily be drawn into that. We're doing what it takes to avoid 1984. It was either keep throwing money to the poor, paying huge amounts for incarceration and having a population of increasingly uneducated people being afraid to leave their homes at night... It was either that, which meant someday a failing economy, or actually doing something to solve the problems. We're not far into the program, and already most people know someone or know of someone who has become a productive citizen because of the Civil Society. We don't want a dictatorship that poses as a democracy, do we?"

Glenn covered his mouth to hide what he was chewing on. "Of course not."

"That's what could happen. The People's Party has done great things and is helping people to understand the importance of good education and hard work, and being civil to one's neighbors. And not having to live in fear. But they're also dedicated to freedom. Do you know anyone who feels that their life has become less free because of what's been done?"

"No."

"Well then?"

"And it has to stay that way."

"And it's taught that way in school. We, the people, have to make sure we're free. Thank goodness the leaders have to vote for us, not for big businesses and big money."

"Let's get another bottle of wine, Ai."

"Okay," she said, noticing that the bottle was empty.

Glenn scooted his chair a bit closer to her. "You're great," he said.

"I'm normal. No one knows who I am."

"You know what I mean. You're wonderful. Let's get married."

She laughed at him. "You're drunk. Ask me again next week, and I might consider it."

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

The People's Party won an overwhelming victory in the 2030 midterm elections. People's Party candidates won 42% of the races for the House and 61% of the race for Senate. The party was still a minority, but there was no majority. A couple of dozen Republicans and Democrats had changed to the party as well. Without a clear majority, nothing could be accomplished without negotiation and discussion. Obstruction would no longer work.

One big news item during the campaign was a Mississippi Senator accepting donations. The IRS caught it while checking money transfers of over \$10,000. The Senator lost his bid for re-election, and he won a hearing on what was an act of treason. Since he hadn't had time to vote on any bills related to the donors, chances were that he might get off with a slap in the face. But he was now subjected to an audit, and if other dark money or gifts were found, he could be judged on his voting record. The company that gave the money was under investigation as well and would be prosecuted.

Legislation poured out of Congress. One bill wanted the President to sign off to allow capital punishment in every State. The President disagreed, however, saying it is the right of the States to decide on the death penalty. Technically, he felt right, but the bill bothered him for two reasons: first, he wasn't sure how he really felt about capital punishment. He could argue with himself for hours and never agree with himself. Second, he didn't want the federal government to be making those decisions. The Civil Society was making great progress, but he hoped it would never be at the expense of people's freedoms and States' rights. Some State's rights had been violated, he felt, but they were limited. It looked like more would be taken if he allowed it.

But what could happen after he left office? Well, whether the Civil Society had worked or not, the United States would have had to come to grips with the question of rights anyway. When the people were filled with fear and with more falling into poverty, the answer could easily have become a vote for repression. The President had saved the country from that, but the Civil Society was too good. People might allow their freedoms to be taken from them because they trusted the government too much.

THE CULTURE OF DEPENDENCY

By 2032, the Civil Society had made great strides in replacing fear with optimism. Republicans never talked about the Trickle-Up effect anymore. No tax cuts for the rich. No one, from either party, talked about raising the Social Security retirement age but rather talked about lowering it, hopefully to 62 or the first year thereafter when a person stopped working. None of them voted against the environment. No one wanted to deregulate Wall Street. They had no reason to vote this way because they didn't get money to do so. The Democrats never introduced

bills to expand Medicare and Food Stamps. Some people deserved help, but few compared to the number that received it before.

There was still a long way to go.

Some people, like Allen Madders, were still caught in cultures of dependency. Allen was 14 and growing up in a trailer park in Texas. He was what some people called White Trash. His parents did nothing and had no motivation to work. They'd grown up just like their son would, collecting welfare and food stamps, figuring out all the ways they could get something from the government. They collected whatever they could from thrift stores and then sold them on the internet or at flea markets. They hunted in season and out of season. They led a relaxing life on other people's money and expected every cent of what they got. When the money was late, they howled about how they couldn't be expected to survive without the money. The curtain in Allen's room was a Confederate flag.

Allen was well-fed and looked it. He attended the closest public junior high school, but very little of what he heard filtered into his mind. Actually, he heard very little, spending most of his time either sleeping, chatting or doodling. He sometimes got up during class to stretch or walk around the classroom. He couldn't wait to get out of school and continue the family traditions.

You have to understand that that's all he knew, and the Civil Society worked on that premise. Had he been born into a different family in a different town with different values, he'd have thought college was a necessity and would have worked to get into a job he liked. But he wasn't born in that other town. He was born a Madders in a run-down trailer park to subsidy dependent parents with no motivation. That meant he was a person and deserved respect as a person. Given respect and the proper training, he could be a good citizen rather than just a person.

For society to work smoothly, there couldn't be Allen Madders or his parents, Skip and Ida Madders. Congress, however, had a difficult time figuring out what to do about the Madders of the country. Ultra-conservatives said, just cut the funding. They'll find jobs. Ultra-liberals thought that was cruel and said the Madders would eventually disappear anyway. Research over the past four years showed that they were decreasing, but they'd never just disappear. Both sides were taking the easy way out.

The President pushed for some legislation to sign and would sign just about anything that came his way that dealt with the problem given the premises of the Civil Society, compassion and rehabilitation. Congress obliged by writing up a draft to discuss. The final product wasn't well done and subsequently had to be modified, but it was a start. Senator Hawley from Missouri called it, "one of the worst pieces of legislation I've ever seen. It's bound to fail. But what we've been doing for the last 60 or 70 years has failed as well. If we're going to fail, let's at least not fail at what we've been failing at."

Here are some of the main points of that bill:

All able-bodied people are required by society to work, and all able-bodied people have the right to work.

Exceptions to the above are senior citizens, those who are shown to be disabled, those with debilitating mental illnesses, those who have savings such that they need not depend on the government for income, children to the age of 18... (and numerous others.)

Those who depend on government subsidies for their livelihoods must actively look for work or be one of the exceptions listed above.

Those who depend on government subsidies must give an accounting of all money made outside of the subsidies they receive, including flea markets, barter, internet sales and services, any unreported or reported part-time work... (and numerous other examples.) Government subsidies will be reduced by the additional amount made by those persons..

Children of people on government subsidies must be in school. Subsidies given for children who do not attend school, who are home-schooled but cannot meet grade level examinations, who are absent from school 15% or more of total school days, who continually disrupt classes, who receive less than a 2.0 out of 4.0 grade point average and those who habitually commit crimes or who commit felonies will be investigated and may be eliminated from the family's subsidies.

Children who are found to have mental or psychological disabilities are exempted.

Every family receiving government subsidies will fill out the IRS 9283a form within 60 days of the passage of this legislation. This document will be collected for the purpose of determining fitness of persons to continue to collect subsidies.

Unfortunately for the Madders, this and another piece of legislation regarding boarding schools for children of offenders spoiled their traditions. When Allen missed school ten times in

the first month, alarms went off. A division of Children's Services checked Allen's attendance record and looked at his past attendance and grades, finding them wanting as well. A new division of the IRS found that the Madders had not filed their 9283a and an investigation before calling the family on this found that Skip was able bodied enough to carry boxes to the post office and to a local flea market and that he was also able to butcher deer and work on his car. They also easily found the Madders' internet sales, which had not been reported.

So, the new IRS division called Skip and Ida for interviews. Skip went in first, and it wasn't a pretty sight. He yelled and screamed about his bad back. "You ain't gonna take away my money! I haven't been able to work for years because of this damn back. How am I gonna make a living when I can't do hardly nothing at all..." Same-old, same-old. He wasn't the first and wouldn't be the last to use his back as an excuse.

The investigator, Martin Soll, asked Skip to be quiet and answer the questions. "If you continue to be uncooperative, Mr. Madders, I have the right to cut your subsidies completely from this moment."

"You can't do that! I'm an honest man who can't work, and you..."

Martin stood up to signal an end to the meeting. Skip shut up and said, "Damn. You're serious. Okay, ask me anything you want."

"All right. And please remember that I won't tolerate outbursts. I am here to get the facts and have no intention of listening to your yelling. So, first question, what did your dad do, Mr. Madders?"

"Why, he was at home."

"He collected welfare, social security, food stamps?"

"Yep."

"Did he have a bad back, too?"

"He sure did. Worst back I've ever seen. Same as mine."

"And how about your grandfather, Mr. Madders? What did he do?"

"You probably already know that."

"He was collecting social security, and his wife got welfare and food stamps for the family."

"That's right. I knew you didn't have to ask me. You been checking up on us decent folks and think you're going to do something to us, don't you?"

“Yes, we have checked up on you. What our investigation shows is that your family has been on government subsidies for generations. Did you happen to fill out your 9283a, by the way?”

“No.”

“What did you do with it?”

“I never got it.”

“You got it, sir. Everyone got it. You got it with your welfare payment. You got it with your food stamps.”

“I never saw it.”

“Whether you saw it or not doesn’t matter. You got it, and it was your responsibility to fill it out. There was some important information that you needed to provide us. For example, have you made any money besides the money you receive from the government?”

“Nope. That’s all I get. I told you I can’t work.”

“Do you sell things on the internet or at flea markets?”

“Oh, those are just hobbies. A guy has to have something to do. If I could work, I would. It gets awfully boring being at home all the time.”

“Would it surprise you if I told you that you made \$6,867 by internet sales alone last year?”

“No. But I paid just about that much just to buy the stuff. It’s a hobby.”

“We’re not stupid, Mr. Madders. You were able to get \$150 by selling one bolo tie. Did you buy that bolo tie for \$150? Where did you get it?”

“I paid \$125 for that.”

“Where did you buy it?”

“Oh, just some guy. It was a nice tie.”

“Do you have a receipt?”

“No.”

“Who’s the guy?”

“I met him just that one time. I don’t know his name.”

“Okay. Where did you buy all the other things that you sold?”

“Mostly at the Salvation Army.”

“The ceramic chicken head?”

“Salvation Army.”

“The coins?”

“Various places.”

“Do you have receipts for any of them.”

“No.”

“I suppose the people at the Salvation Army know you pretty well. Is that right?”

“Yeah. They know me.”

“Did you read the part on the form that asked for your doctor’s name and phone number?”

“No, I just threw it away.”

“Okay, but if you have a bad back, you needed to report that. Who is your doctor?”

“I don’t have one. The doctor can’t do a thing about this back. He told me that himself.”

“When was the last time you went to a doctor about your back?”

“Oh, it was... lemme see... I don’t know. Quite a while ago.”

“Do you take any medication for it?”

“No. Nothing works.”

“How’s Allen doing?”

“Good. Why?”

“What kind of boy is he?”

“Well, lemme see. He’s a normal boy. Smart as hell, too. You know, he can make just about anything out of shipping pallets. He made his own bed. He made our chairs. He can do just about anything. In fact, he sold a couple of beds not long ago for \$300 a piece. That’s how good he is. And, he’s an expert marksman. Knows his guns inside and out. He’s a good boy. Real good boy.”

“Have you seen his grades at school?”

“Hell, he doesn’t get good grades. I know that. But he’s a genius with pallets.”

“Did you know he missed more than a third of his school days last year?”

“I never looked to see.”

“Well, now you know. How do you feel about it?”

“He’s a boy. He has other things on his mind.”

“Have you read the comments from his teachers?”

“He read them to me. We got a good laugh out of them. They can’t expect a boy to be sitting in class like that without getting up and stretching his legs and things.”

“What about the bullying incident?”

“He couldn’t help himself. Could you? Here was this little black boy who turned out to be a homo. Sure he teased him. Anybody would. It was no big thing.”

“I see.”

“When you go to a flea market, who carries the stuff in?”

Skip looked down for a moment. “Well, with my back the way it is, Ida has to do that. I feel sorry for her, too.”

“Who butchers the deer?”

“That’d have to be Al and the other kids. I told you, my back is awful bad.”

The investigator asked about the other children in turn, all five of them, and then concluded. “All right, Mr. Madders. Thanks for your answers. Here’s the form you need to fill out. You can do that while I’m talking to Mrs. Madders.”

Needless to say, the Madders hadn’t rehearsed their answers. Ida told different stories about the bolo tie, the coins, and who butchered the deer. She denied the flea markets. But, yes, Allen was a good boy and helpful around the house. “Awful patriotic,” she said, which is what the investigator thought as well.

Martin actually liked the interviews. He enjoyed being in control. He had the force of the law, good law, behind him. In most cases, he could easily separate the truth from the lies. Most of the time, he felt sorry for the people he had to interview, but at other times, he had to control his dislike for them. This was one case when he had to put his dislike aside. He reminded himself that he’d heard the same things from so many people and that the only difference was the racism which had turned into bullying and threats. There was no place in society for racism. The Madders would learn that.

He also disliked the next part of his job, which was to decide the fate of the family. He wanted to take more time, but he had too many cases to sit and think about each one for long. A decision was due quickly. “Mr. and Mrs. Madders, it’s time for lunch. I’ll see you in an hour. Same place.”

Skip protested. “But I’ve got better things to do than wait around...”

“Like what?” Martin interrupted. “Are you on the way to the doctor?”

“No, but...”

“In an hour.” With that, he walked out the door.

As he went back, he stuck a small tracking device to Skip and Ida's car. They were there when he got back inside, and they didn't stand. "Hello, Ida and Skip. Let's go into the office."

Inside, he looked at their forms and saw them to be identical. "Mr. Madders, you said you bought the bolo tie for \$125 from some unknown guy, but your wife told me you got it for a dollar and a quarter at the Salvation Army."

"I was wrong about that," Mrs. Madders replied. "I was thinking of something else."

"That's fine then," Martin told her. Skip smiled when he heard it.

"How much in your bank accounts?" Martin asked. He already knew the answer. He wanted to find some way to give the Madders a chance and not let his dislike override his good will.

"There's about \$150 there. Just the one," Skip said.

"I see you own your trailer."

"Yeah. We own it."

"It's a double-wide, I see." Double-wide or not, it was a dump, and the grounds around it resembled a dump with litter piled around and under the trailer.

"Yep."

"Okay. So here's how it works. Neither one of you have any reason why you can't work. In fact, you are working."

"Mr. Soll..."

Now comes the respect, Martin thought. "Save it. Let me finish, and then you'll have a chance to talk. Briefly.

"So, there's no reason why you can't work. You have six children, and I suppose that's because there was money to come in for them. That kind of money is drying up now; so you need to be finding some work for yourselves. You make some money from your internet sales and the flea market. It's not enough to live on, but it's something. Allen made a couple of thousand last year making furniture."

Skip couldn't help himself. "All of that's not enough to live on!"

"Maybe not, but look at it this way. There are people out there who are working. Maybe your next door neighbors work. So, do you think your next door neighbors want to give you a part of their wages so that you and people like you can stay at home and sell items on the internet

and at flea markets? Would you like to give some of what you made to people who don't want to work?"

Silence. Some people would have told Martin, "Of course." Or they'd point out that they give money to relatives.

"No, you wouldn't. You'd like to keep as much of your money as possible. So here's the decision I made based on the law. We're going to have to deduct the average of what you make every month from flea markets and internet sales. That's probably between \$9,000 and \$12,000 a year if you do as well at flea markets as you do on the internet. Let's go with the lower figure. That gives us \$750 a month. Allen made a couple thousand. We'll go a little low on that and call it \$150 a month. You own your trailer; so you only pay \$75 a month to rent the space. With a trailer like yours, it would be at least another \$200. Probably more. So now we're at \$1100. Do you understand that other people will be thrilled to know that you've made this money and that they can reduce their payments to you?"

Silence again.

"For the next three months, all I'm going to do is cut your allowance by eleven-hundred a month. During that time, you will need to look for work. You'll be reporting to our Labor Division to show where you've applied and when. The law says you have to *actively* look for work. One application a day isn't considered very active."

"You mean this crap?"

"I do. I understand if you're a bit worried and maybe scared right now. That would be a normal response. You haven't worked for years if ever. What if no one hires you? This is a huge change. But you have to think about the hundreds of thousands of dollars your family has already received from the American people. That time has come to an end, and you have to resign yourself to that fact. Now you need a job."

Skip stood up. "That's it?" he barked. "You call me and Ida in here for this? You let us live like this for years, but you're suddenly going to take it away?"

Martin interrupted. "Sit down!"

Ida pulled on Skip's sleeve to make him sit, but Skip didn't want to lose face in front of his wife. "I won't sit down. You're talking about cutting a third of our income! I won't let it happen!"

"Okay," Martin said, "then stand. But you will let it happen because that's what the law says will happen. Now, we come to the problem with Allen. I'm of a mind to take him to boarding school because of his racist behavior, his bullying and threats, and his inability to get a good education. And because he disrupts classes. I'm going to give you a chance to say something about it though. Do you think you can make sure that Allen goes to school, gets a C average, stops disrupting classes and stops any bullying, threats or other violent behavior he's engaged in? I know he's a boy, but a normal boy goes to school and doesn't threaten others. What do you say?"

Ida began to sob. "But he's our son. Please don't take him away."

"Can you make sure he follows the rules I just gave you? That's what I need to know."

"Of course! Yes! He'll straighten right up. He'll be no trouble at all. He doesn't want to go to one of those places for kids."

"Why not? They're nice places. And it would be good for him. He could go to school, learn a trade, stop his violent behavior. Maybe go on to college. He could be the first in your family for years to actually do something with his life."

"No. I'd miss him too much, Mr. Soll. Please," she sobbed, touching his desk with outstretched arms.

"Okay. I have a feeling I'll regret this, but you go home and tell Allen about attending school, getting average grades, and behaving himself. We'll be checking up on him right away; so he's got to make the changes. If he can't do any one of these things, I'll have to ask for him to go to boarding school. "

"Thank you, Mr. Soll. Thank you!" she said, still pleadingly.

"You might tell the same to your other children as well. Help them grow up to do something, please."

Skip was brash and boisterous the rest of the day, complaining loudly to Mac, his neighbor. "Who's he think he is? He can't take our money like that! Just like that! He calls us in, and the next thing you know, he cut eleven hundred a month. And... And get this! He was talking about taking Allen. My first boy. So the guy says that Allen's gotta be nice to niggers and homos or they'll haul him in. Not my boy. He's not gonna kowtow to them."

Mac and Skip had drank six beers apiece in the past hour and a half, as was their custom. "That right?" Mac asked. "I heard something about this kinda stuff."

“Damn right. Better be careful or they'll be after you next. They're trying to make everyone be nice and make everybody work. So he says, ‘One slip-up and we'll haul Allen in.’ I says, ‘Okay. I'll tell him that. He'll be a good boy from here on out.’ Just to get him off Allen's back. But I got a plan. Allen's not even gonna be here anymore. We're sending him off to Arkansas.”

“Arkansas?” Mac asked and threw his empty can under the trailer; something like sweeping dust under a rug. “What's he gonna do in Arkansas?”

“Carpentry, I imagine. He'll just stay until the heat's off. He'll be 18 in a few years and be able to do what he wants. Yeah, we fooled that guy for sure.”

In a case like this, investigators like Martin knew the chances were good that the boy would run. Rarely would a family suddenly see the light and take their responsibilities seriously. Skip would show he had no intentions of getting his son a good education if he did help him into hiding. That would merely add to the evidence against them. It was never pleasant to take a child from home, but had there been no Civil Society, it might have been done at some time anyway. More likely, Allen would have ended up in either juvenile detention or jail. Martin gained comfort from the fact that Allen could be saved before his life was ruined.

It usually happened late at night. Most people thought they'd be inconspicuous in the darkness. That might have been true in the 20th century but not now. The computer sensed Skip's car heading into Oklahoma and sent the message, including the case files, to US Marshals to pick the car up. Within an hour, they stopped the car and took Skip and Allen into custody without a fight. The case against Skip and Ida was complete. Along with fraud against the federal government, they'd neglected their son's education and even tried to hinder it.

Allen went first to a military school because of his violent behavior, absenteeism and disruption of classes. He kicked and screamed like a politician when told he'd lose his swastika, murder, and white power tattoos, which confirmed that he'd been sent to the right place. After being signed in, the tattoos removed, and a uniform given him, school personnel showed Allen around the campus. He saw the other students going through military-style drills outside and heard the newest cadence being called out from classrooms. “Three times three is nine, drill sergeant. Three times four is twelve, drill sergeant. Three time five is fifteen, drill sergeant.”

SELF CENSORSHIP

Training had come a long way since Brad's time. Rarely did it take six months or longer before a *recruit* or a *student* understood the damaging effects of racism, laziness and violence on society. Improved techniques, which partly used the peer pressure of others, could change a new student in weeks or days. Some teachers swore that once initial training had ended, these students were easier to teach than those in public schools.

Of course, this was also the biggest concern about the Civil Society's methods. Was what some called *brainwashing* leading the country to not just a civil society but a brave, new world? Had technology progressed so much that it could be used to destroy people's free will? And yet, the majority of Americans loved the new society. They had begun to shed their fear. Convicted criminals now came out of the system as good citizens. They hadn't spent their time sitting in cells, looking at concrete walls and becoming neurotic. Young people who previously would have been put in foster homes or juvenile detention centers received educations and learned discipline. The new boarding schools gave them encouragement to become productive citizens.

The news featured success stories. The Society Channel ran documentaries on a large range of people who'd been through the process and were now living normal lives. They talked with ex-gang members, ex-cons, neglected children, teens who'd gotten into trouble, children of dependent families and more. Putting the priority on culture rather than money had changed lives for the better.

Research found that violence on television and movies had more of an impact on viewers attitudes than had been anticipated. They also warned that sexual stereotypes in the media were extremely powerful influences on, particularly, younger minds. Young girls identified with women they saw on movies, and so they chose the make-up, the revealing clothes, and the filthy language that characterized these women. Young men as well were influenced greatly by the *manly* image of the heroes. These manly men spoke dirty, bullied others, drank, had huge muscles and took charge. Women were more often followers.

A new movement, started by a group of Christians in California, sprang up and called for entertainment companies to self-censor their products. Wisely, they didn't frame themselves as a religious organization but allowed anyone, regardless of their religion or of their non-religion, to join them in bringing better standards to the entertainment business. They pointed to old television shows that were still funny so many years later. These were shows like Andy Griffith

that used actual jokes rather than references to sex in order to be funny. Was it possible, they asked, in this day and age to find anyone who could be funny without using the F word or jokes about sex? They asserted that shows like *Dragnet* had been widely popular, first in radio and then television, but didn't need to show graphic details of violent crimes to increase viewers. Heroes and heroines were more like normal, everyday citizens.

The era of any social consciousness in music had died. However, this organization, the People for Social Consciousness, backed new artists who wanted to say something but couldn't get the industry to give them a try. New folk singers and folk-rock bands were headlined on the organization's new radio, television and internet shows. They created new songs and remade songs by artists who'd made them popular years before. Pete Seeger. Phil Ochs. Tim Hardin. Bob Dylan. *Little Wheel Spin*, became one of the first huge successes. So did *Simple Song of Freedom, Turn, Turn, Turn*, and *Little Boxes*.

PSC's influence rapidly grew, and music companies felt the pinch. They started signing on new prospects who had something to say, many of them the same artists they'd rejected just months before. The times were changing. Students in public schools felt tensions decrease, and the kids who did really want to study actually could study. People had changed the country, thanks to the President, of course. People had stood up and said enough is enough. And that rebellious spirit of youth concentrated itself into meaningful dialogue and talk about making the country better. The new music walked side by side with the young.

Members of Congress felt pressure to work on censorship. Popular singer, Victor Cheng, sat before a Senate committee on censorship and said, "The pendulum swings both ways. In the twenties, we heard that *Anything Goes*. The World War Two era brought more discipline. But the pendulum swung back, and you could hear God-awful songs, if that's what you can call them, about killing cops, and songs filled with the F word. Songs full of hatred and violence. The people of our country were filled with fear, but most of them never thought of the effects these popular musicians, if that's what you can call them, had on our culture."

Senator Duncan of Minnesota broke in. "We know the fear that people had and are just starting to get over. That's what the Civil Society was for. The question is whether music really has that much influence."

"Come on, Senator. If you listen to recordings of someone preaching violence for long enough, you're certainly going to be affected by it. Research shows that. We don't allow hate

speech and hate crimes. Then why do we allow popular music to promote hate and violence? It doesn't make sense.

"Ten years ago, I might have been banned from the airways for saying something like this. No, we were supposed to believe that free speech meant that *Anything Goes*. I don't believe it does. A society that is working for the interests of its citizens will naturally hate what's offensive to civil society. It will naturally hate those things that make our children think that violence is a normal way of acting. Or that sex is the reason for living. Or that men are the aggressors and women are weak and love a man who is brash and offensive."

The Senator spoke up again. "Does music really have that much influence? That's my question. Maybe you could just say yes or no."

"Yes. And everyone knows it. There's no reason for you to be calling me or anyone else to this Committee, because you've seen the statistics. The research. If I said no, you'd point to the research. But my answer is actually yes. I believe that there should be freedom of speech, but freedom of speech is not absolute freedom. We already know that. If another Senator told the media that he saw you several times hiring prostitutes and taking drugs, you wouldn't stand for it. He doesn't have the right to do that. Unless it's true. There are limits to free speech. We don't allow hate speech, like I said. Why would we allow cop-killing, child abusing and any other kind of violence-related speech? The answer is yes. I don't think those types of speech are protected by the Constitution."

"So you mean, yes, music has influence?"

"Yes. Yes. How can I make that more clear?"

ALLEN MATTERS

Allen immediately hated the military school. His first thoughts were that there had to be some like-minded students there. The world couldn't have gone completely crazy.

Shortly after he'd seen his bed, he was taken into a room where Officer Smith, a black student, Neil, and a white student, Steve, were sitting around a desk. Smith sat in the center and the students on the ends. They all stood for him when he entered. The officer taking Allen around introduced the three who all extended their hands. Allen shook hands with the two white men but glared at Neil.

"Hey, come on, Allen. We're going to be friends," Neil said with a smile.

"Fuck you," Allen answered smugly. "I ain't gonna be no friend of yours."

They all sat, and Officer Smith asked, "So, why do you think you're here, Allen?"

Allen stood up. "I'm not talking with that nigger in the room!"

"Think he's gonna bite you?" Steve asked. "If he tries, I'll stop him."

"Ha-ha. Just get him outta here, will ya?"

Smith said, "We'll be here awhile. So you might as well just relax."

"I'm not talking."

"You just did," Steve said with a smile.

"Ha-ha. And why don't you just shut the fuck up? I didn't ask to be here."

"No you didn't," Steve replied. "Neither did me or Neil. Just like us, you'll be here for awhile; so you might as well make the best of it. Let's talk."

It took awhile, but like most of the guys, Allen couldn't refuse forever. The pressure gradually got to him.

"So, why do you think you're here, Allen?" Smith asked for the fifth or sixth time.

"Because the fucking government put me here. That's why. They took away my daddy's money. Treated him like a criminal. And then they arrested him for doing absolutely nothing wrong."

"Let's break this down," Smith said. "They took away your daddy's money? Was your daddy working for that money?"

"I don't have to answer anything."

"No? But if you're so smart and the rest of us so stupid, you might as well fill us in so we'll be as smart as you are."

"My daddy been getting money every month for years. Then some idiot comes to town and says he makes too much and takes some of it away."

"That does sound bad," Smith said. "Did he give any reason for taking away the money?"

"He said my daddy made money from flea markets and internet sales. So he just cut his government check the same as he made."

"The guy was probably just doing what the law told him to do."

"So you agree with him!? Damn." He hit the desk with his fist.

"I didn't agree or disagree. I just want to know what happened," Smith said, ignoring the outburst.

Steve spoke up. "Yeah. My dad had the same thing happen. They cut him out entirely."

"You don't have five brothers and sisters, dude."

"You're right. I have six."

"So what'd he do?"

"They let him go. So he just kept selling stuff."

"You get to see him?"

"Yeah. Sometimes I call him up, you know."

"They cut him off for selling stuff?"

"Yeah. Same as your dad."

The gears began moving in Allen's head. Ideas formed and were pushed away. More ideas. More pushing. He wasn't the only one who the government had done this to. But that didn't make it right. No way. His daddy had the right to his money. He'd never think otherwise. Still, how could Steve sit there so calmly, like everything was okay? "Yeah, well, fuck that. He must've been making as much as they gave him."

"That's about it."

"My daddy didn't make much. Nothing wrong with picking up a little extra cash. Man, the government's been taken over by a bunch of idiots. Think they can run everybody's life. Put people in camps and military schools and crap. Ever since we had that black President, the country's going down the toilet. It's time somebody stood up to these people and showed them what's right. This President's gotta be a Jew the way he talks about money all the time. Fine for him and all the rest. They got money..."

Officer Smith knew it wasn't time for Allen to realize the truth, but he'd seen the gears moving. He knew that Allen hadn't ever heard of *good, honest work*. Allen hadn't heard of the importance of education. There would be doubt, denial, more doubt and more denial. Steve and Neil knew it too. A kid doesn't get raised for 14 years without taking on the ideals and personalities of the parents. Racism, dependency, stealing from the system and violence wouldn't go away overnight. That's all he knew.

Then again, Allen was in good hands. He wasn't in a prison where he'd meet other white supremacists and plot with them day in and day out. He wouldn't have gangs of any other races

to worry about. When he finished school, he'd have actually learned something and would be changed, ready to take on an occupation and to live peacefully in society. His family would have their first productive son in generations. He'd be proud of that. Someday. Just like Steve was.

2032 RE-ELECTION

The President easily won re-election. Because of the ill-health of his Vice-President, Barspool chose Governor Barkley as his running mate, which made his ticket all the stronger. The other parties ran their own candidates, but no one expected to win. The Civil Society was working. The other candidates couldn't deny it but said it was taking too long. Voters, however, whether they thought so or not, didn't want to change course. Most of them had been untouched by the changing way the government dealt with deviation. And the media, like the Society channel, reassured them that things were getting better. A new optimism had arisen in the country.

What was there to be pessimistic about! Children enjoyed school more. Students who disrupted classes were dealt with, either living at home and going to alternate schools or going to boarding schools. Standardized test scores across the country were going up. There were many neighborhoods in which people felt more at ease, not fearing the intruder as much as they had before. Science was well-funded, and new technologies and innovations made living less expensive and more comfortable. New energies became better. Everyone had internet without paying for it. The sick could visit clinics without paying, and they didn't have to worry about going broke if they had to stay in a hospital. That is, many of the fears people had about life and making a living had practically vanished, and more people considered themselves middle-class than had in years. Money was moving around in the economy as more people had money to spend.

The venue for the President's acceptance speech looked like the venue at any other acceptance speech. The stage was decorated with red, white and blue signs bearing the President's name. His family, the Vice-President and his family and some key aides were on stage behind him as he stood at the podium. "Can we do something about these lights?" he asked. "I can't see anyone past the second row." Soon the lights were adjusted to his liking, and he began.

“Friends. Fellow Americans. Thank you very much for your support and your patience. It was just a little over four years ago that I gave the first details of the Civil Society. It wasn’t even called the Civil Society then. It was just a dream. An inspiration. I knew the idea was right, but no one had ever tried it. After four years, we’ve started to make progress, and I think we’ve made good progress. It’s with the help of all of you that made it possible. You forced Washington to reform. You told your Representatives and Senators to take care of the people, not their wallets. And it’s brought dramatic results. Washington is voting for you now, not for the big money. Sometimes I wondered if it was going to happen, but you made it happen. I want to thank you for having the trust in me to do that. I am forever grateful.

“Like every President who’s been re-elected, I have to say that our work isn’t done. Of course, it’s never done. With every step we take, we find that there are more things to consider and more obstacles to overcome. While we’ve made life safer and more comfortable for many, and while we’ve been compassionate to those who had once made us uncomfortable, we can still do more, and we can do it better. Technology and experience have helped us to do better.

“As far as obstacles go, I would say that technology is our biggest obstacle to continuing our free society. For example, there are those who call for cameras everywhere so that criminals can be more easily caught. We have the technology to do that, of course, but we must be very careful how we use our technology. Along with the millions or billions of cameras that could be put up comes the opportunity for you to be watched. It won’t be long until our technology would allow the government to watch millions of its citizens and someday to watch every citizen. I want to warn you tonight that that is a frightening scenario.

“Right now, our government appears to be honest and looking out for we the peoples’ rights. But what about a future of being monitored? We cannot be lulled into being so comfortable that we allow the government to become a Big Brother, no matter how benevolent that Big Brother may seem. Technology is advancing so rapidly that we can’t imagine what it will bring us.

“Therefore, we must be observant and watchful. We must guard our rights diligently. While we want to rid the body of our country of cancers and diseases, we want to always be sure that we act in the best interests of everyone. That includes the individual members who are ill. We help them and guide them to become productive members, productive and working cells in this body.

"For those who can't work, we've made great strides. Think about the mentally ill. We used to put them into institutions, many of which were woefully deficient. The prisoners there lived in cells not much different than prison cells. How can we possibly treat a person in such inhumane conditions? We've since improved our services and help people as much as possible to recover. Barring recovery, we at least let them live their lives in dignity. That's what the Civil Society is about.

"If a hundred or two hundred years from now we've left a legacy, let that legacy be that we cared about others, that we did our best to help the poor and weak and to raise them up to live useful and comfortable lives. Let our legacy be that we had compassion for the criminal. We found ways to help everyone. And hopefully, just hopefully, society a hundred or two hundred years from now will be thinking as we do now. We can have compassion for people, and we can make a society that is good for everyone. In fact, a compassionate society is a stronger society than the hateful, fearful society.

"At times, it won't be easy. Twenty years from now, our leaders may complain that it's too hard to run a campaign without more money. Don't let them have the money. Be sure you remember what we've been through. The obstructionism. The legal corruption. The leaders voting for money and not for the people. And pass on that knowledge to your children.

"Pass on to them the fact that we used to put people in small, concrete cells and lock them in for years because they committed crimes. Pass it on that we paid handsomely for that privilege and that we never had the comfort of saying that we've helped these people in any way. Tell your children, and have them tell their children that we have evolved and learned the better way, which is to help the criminal, the bully, the mentally ill and other people who we never helped before. And in most cases, it wasn't their faults.

"We've progressed to a society that recognizes that every person deserves help, and that when we help them, we improve our society. We are safer. We have fewer drug problems. We have less abuse. We have less crime. When people cannot get what they need, and when people live in fear, they become frustrated and fearful. So, we have these problems to a greater extent. Make sure that future generations understand the power of a compassionate society.

"Once you let your guard down and allow politicians to take control again, it will be too late. Once technology advances and you've allowed it to control your lives, it will be too late. So, although this isn't much of an acceptance speech, it is what's in my heart. I pray that somehow

we will be spared a dangerous future. You, the people, are the ones to ensure that that future never comes, and we will strongly emphasize this in schools.

“And so, yes, I do thank you. I thank you with all my heart that you have honored me with your trust. I will do everything I can to guide us into an even more compassionate, free, democratic and comfortable future, a future in which no one is left behind.

“I love you all. Thank you.”

The President got down off the stage and walked into a crowd waiting to embrace him. And embrace him they did, most with tears flowing down their cheeks. Everyone thanked him as they hugged him, and to all the thanks he answered, “I didn’t do anything. You did.” Or, “You made it happen.” The Vice-President and all the family members also walked out into the sea of supporters. The Secret Service officers there still have nightmares of the scene.

There were always the complaints that reform was taking too long. By this time, there’d been little done to help the mentally ill. Congress debated about what to do about the homeless. Discrimination and racism still existed, but they were much less intense. Congress couldn’t complete everything as quickly as it would have liked to; but it was working for us instead of the big money. The people were optimistic that many more problems would be solved.

Twenty years later, our society is still civil, but we are always reminded, especially when we’re in school, that we the people must be diligent and watchful. It is now our country, and if we lose it, there may not be another President Barspool to lead us out of the mess. In fact, technology may have advanced too far for us to ever get it back.

JUST THE BEGINNING