

Comments on selected articles from *The New York Times*

by Phillip W. Weiss

1. Date: October 18, 2011

A1 “Countless Grievances, One Thread: We’re Angry” - Yes, people are angry. Spin: Anger may be the glue that unites all the protesters and in turn the protesters with the public.

A27 “The Evangelical Rejection of Reason” - Evangelicals are angry too. Spin: creationists = close-minded = unreasonable = Republican; belief in evolution = open-minded = reasonable = Democrat.

A13 “Eminent Domain Fight Has a Canadian Twist” - A Canadian oil company is claiming right of eminent domain to build a pipeline through six states. Spin: further eroding of civil rights, specifically, the Fifth Amendment.

2. Date: October 20, 2011

A1 “Gloom Grips Consumers; It May Be Home Prices” - Major deflation in price of homes. Spin: the U.S. standard of living is declining and this trend may be irreversible.

A4 “Scientists See Promise in Vaccine for Malaria” - a vaccine for Malaria may not be completely effective. Spin: don't expect an effective vaccine for AIDS anytime soon.

A8 “Bystanders’ Neglect of Injured Toddler Sets Off Soul-Searching on Web Sites in China” - people were allegedly indifferent to people in need in China. Spin: Communist China is an immoral country.

A18 “Parents Urged Again to Limit TV for Youngest” - children are spending too much time watching TV and using electronic devices. Spin: unintended negative consequences from introduction of new technology.

A25 “Commander Faces Penalty over Use of Pepper Spray” - a police officer has been charged with improper use of pepper spray. Spin: a police officer is being scapegoated to assuage negative public reaction to recent police actions.

A29” Does Sex Undermine Parental Rights?” - the commentator is opposed to mandatory sex education being taught in schools. Spin: the public school system is immoral and corrupt.

3. Date: October 24, 2011

A1 “Tunisians Vote in a Milestone of Arab Change” - Tunisia may set an example for other Arab countries to follow. Spin: a message to other Arab countries to give democracy a chance.

A4 “Afghan President Says His Country Would Back Pakistan in a Clash with the U.S.” - President Karzai wants to maintain good relations with Pakistan. Spin: President Karzai cannot be trusted.

A9 “U.S. to Sustain Military Power in the Pacific, Panetta Says” - despite impending budget cuts, the U.S. will maintain its military presence in the western Pacific region. Spin: U.S. is refusing to cede the western Pacific to China and a warning to China not to provoke the U.S.

A17 “In College, Working Hard to Learn High School Material” - Many students in city colleges need to take remediation classes. Spin: public education is a sham; educational standards need to be raised.

A21 “Antonio Cassese, War Crimes Law Expert, Dies at 74” - jurist who helped found two war crimes tribunals and shape current law regarding prosecution for war crimes. Spin: crimes against humanity continue to be committed.

A23 “7 Billion - burgeoning increase in world population is threatening to outstrip available resources.” Spin: the commentator is pro-abortion rights.

4. Date: October 25, 2011

A1 “From Brooklyn Office, Mixing Clout and Charity” - Marty Markowitz, Borough President of Brooklyn, operates a number of charities.

Spin: Is Mr. Markowitz a philanthropist or an influence peddler who is using charities as a front for a political machine?

“Islamists Head toward Victory in Tunisia Vote” - In a recent election, an Islamic party has emerged as the strongest party and will be part of the government in Tunisia. Spin: The U.S. has cause for concern over events in Tunisia.

A4 “U.S. Pivots Eastward to Address Uneasy Allies” - The U. S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has assured U.S. allies in the western Pacific that the U.S. will not be reducing its military presence in the region. Spin: Mr. Panetta's remarks are an explicit warning to China that the U.S. will defend its interests in the western Pacific.

A25 “College Readiness Lacking, Reports Show” - most students who graduate from NYC high schools are not ready for college.

Spin: The NYC public education system is a failing; any pronouncements of improvements in student performance are a sham.

A30 “While Veterans Wait” - staff shortages are affecting the DVA's ability to provide health care services for veterans. Spin: talk of the government's commitment to care for veterans is rhetoric. i.e., "language that is elaborate, pretentious, insincere, or intellectually vacuous." source: <http://www.answers.com/topic/rhetoric>

5. Date: October 26, 2011

A1 “U.S. Expected to Charge Executive Tied to Galleon Case” - this report is about a Wall Street financier who is being charged with inside trading. Spin: there is something amiss with the SEC; more government regulation of the banking industry is needed.

“New Poll Finds Deep Distrust of Government” - many Americans do not trust the government. Spin: the government needs to start listening to the people and not to special interests groups.

“Push for ‘Personhood’ Amendment Represents New Tack in Abortion Fight” - redefining the legal definition of the start of a human life. Spin: Roe v. Wade notwithstanding, the subject of abortion continues to be a volatile a issue.

A20 “Top Earners Doubled Share of Income, Study Finds” - rich people are getting richer. Spin: urgent need for tax reform.

6. Date: October 31, 2011

A1 “Soldier’s Death Raises Suspicions in Chinatown - a 19 year old U. S. soldier, who is Chinese-American, in Afghanistan, is found dead. Spin: Was the soldier a victim of a hate crime?

A4 “American Identified as Bomber in Attack on African Union in Somalia” - a 22 year old bomber is an American. Spin: Are terrorist cliques operating in the United States?

A9 “‘Occupy’ Protest at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London Divides Church” - St. Paul's Cathedral is a venue for protests, forcing the church to debate issues. Spin: Does the church have a role in politics?

A11 “In a Standardized Era, a Creative School Is Forced to Be More So” - Under No-Child-Left-Behind, a school with high performing students is deemed to be failing. Spin: No-Child-Left-Behind needs to be modified.

A16 “In East Harlem, ‘Keep Out’ Signs Apply to Renters” - Landlords are refusing to rent apartments. Spin: Rents are being kept artificially high.

A21 “Bombs, Bridges, and Jobs” - the commentator believes that Keynesian economic policy can produce jobs but the policy is opposed by some for political reasons.

7. Date: November 2, 2011

A4 “In Libya, Fighting May Outlast the Revolution” - Militias are refusing to disarm. Spin: Possibility of civil war in Libya.

A14 “China Seeks \$2.4 Million in Taxes from Dissident” - Critic of the Chinese government is accused of owing back taxes. Spin: The Chinese government is using the power of taxation punish and discredit a dissident.

A15 “Tourism in Egypt Suffers Amid the Gloom of a Stalled Revolution” - Continued political instability has made Egypt less attractive for tourists. Spin: Egypt needs to resolve its political problems.

A18 “Seeing Social Graces as Waning in the South” - According to the article, in the South people are behaving more selfishly. Spin: Cultural mores are changing.

A31 “A Long List of Suckers” - the commentator is in favor of withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. Spin: The U.S. needs to develop new foreign policy strategies besides military intervention.

8. Date: November 3, 2011

A1 “Trouble Found in Police Department by the Outside” - The NYPD Internal Affairs Bureau is not aggressively investigating cases of corruption in the department. Spin: The NYPD is covering up corruption.

A3 “Fraud Case Seen as a Red Flag for Psychology Research” - The published reports a noted psychologist, whose work was based on fabricated evidence, are found to have no scientific merit. Spin: Research standards have become lax.

A31 “Who Speaks for the Silent Majority?” - the commentator discusses how Richard Nixon claimed to speak for the "silent majority" and won the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections. Spin: Whoever claims to speak for the "silent majority" will win the 2012 presidential election.

9. Date: November 8, 2011

A6 “China Tries to Add Cultural Clout to Economic Muscle” - The Chinese government is repressing artistic expression. Spin: Freedom of speech does not exist in China.

A19 “In Mayor’s Contest for a New Engineering School, Only One Judge Counts” - Despite the existence of an advisory council, Mayor Bloomberg will decide whowill build a new school. Spin: The mayor has too much power.

A27 “End Bonuses for Bankers” - The commentator wants bankers to be denied bonuses if the banks perform poorly. Spin: Banks will function better if bankers' pay is linked to performance.

10. Date: November 9, 2011

A1 “Panetta Weighs Pentagon Cuts Once Off Limits” - The Secretary of Defense is considering major cuts in military spending, including retirement and health care benefits. Spin: U.S. military power is on the wane.

“Preaching Virtue of Spanking, Even as Deaths Fuel Debate” - Certain groups believe in corporeal punishment as a way of disciplining children. Spin: Spanking - legitimate form of discipline or child abuse?

A19 “48 Years in Charge, Doing What’s Always Worked” - An old-time principal still believes in discipline, with good results. Spin: Public schools need more discipline.

A22 “Overseeing ‘the Chair,’ Never Easily” - Warden at Sing Sing opposed capital punishment. Spin: Capital punishment should be abolished.

A24 “Letters: James Baker on Reducing Nuclear Arms” - A former Secretary of State advocates nuclear arms reduction provided that other nations reciprocate. Spin: Unilateral reduction in nuclear arms will put U. S. national security at risk.

Making “Tickets Disappear” - The commentator asserts that ticket fixing by police officers puts the public at risk. Spin: The NYPD needs to be reformed.

11. Date: November 10, 2011

Your Money section

F1” ‘I Should Have Known Better” - A financial planner made reckless investments getting him and family into deep financial trouble. Spin: People need to be more prudent in how they invest their money.

A1 “Ohio Overturns a Law Limiting Unions’ Rights” - Voters in Ohio strike down a law restricting collective bargaining rights. Spin: Republicans are vulnerable on this issue.

“Air Force Mortuary Failed to Fix Stark Mishandling of Remains” - Air Force officials lost body parts of deceased service members. Spin: the Air Force needs to improve its management of the remains of deceased service members.

A12 “A Long-Awaited Apology for Shiites, but the Wounds Run Deep” - According to the article, in 1991 the U.S. encouraged Shiites to rebel against Sadaam Hussein and then did nothing to assist the rebels, who were slaughtered. Spin: The United States needs to be honest in its dealings with other countries.

A31 “Trouble Beside the Bay” - According to the article, in trying to control white protesters, the Oakland police department is cracking down on local nonwhite residents. Spin: Nonwhites are being treated unfairly by the police.

12. Date: November 14, 2011

A1 “Hispanics Reviving Faded Towns on the Plains” - In the Midwest, Hispanics are repopulating towns in regions that have experienced decline in the white population. Spin: Hispanics are replacing white people.

A14 “Occupy Protesters Shift Focus to Campuses” - As protesters are forced to leave city parks, they are moving their protests to college campuses. Spin: The protests continue to lose public support.

“Recruiting Veterans, Columbia Finds an Impress Applicant Pool” - An outreach program to recruit veterans for admission to university found many well-qualified applicants. Spin: Not all veterans are maladjusted.

A29 “A Frugal Fleet to the Rescue” - The commentator suggests ways to reduce military costs without sacrificing military strength. Spin: The U. S. can reduce military spending without pulling back from its military commitments.

13. Date: November 15, 2011

A4 “Karzai Call for Meeting of Elders Questioned” - President Karzai wants to convene a council of elders to gain support for his policies. Spin: Afghanistan's democratic reforms are a sham.

A14 “Bishops Open ‘Religious Liberty’ Drive” - Roman Catholic bishops are claiming that opposition to policies advocated by the Catholic Church are part of a trend to suppress religious freedom. Spin: The Catholic Church is losing its influence in shaping public opinion.

A23 “Friend-of-Court Filings Mushroom, and a Law Professor Takes Issue” - there has been a proliferation in the number of amicus briefs of dubious quality filed with the court. Spin: Amicus briefs are little more than intellectual grandstanding.

A30 “The Torture Candidates - At a recent debate, three Republican presidential candidates expressed support for water boarding. Spin: Many in the Republican Party believe that torture is appropriate.

A31 “Let’s All Feel Superior” - According to the commentator, it is easy to criticize others without knowing what one would have done in the same situation. Spin: People use the failings of others to feel superior.

14. Date: November 17, 2011

A1 “A Marine Base for Australia Irritates China” - The United States will be deploying troops to Australia over China's objections: Spin: The U.S. is sending a message to China that the U.S. is maintaining its presence in the western Pacific region.

“U.S. to Review Cases Seeking Deportations” - In an attempt to speed up the deportation of violent illegal aliens, the DHS will be giving priority to prosecuting deportations of violent illegal aliens while other illegal immigrants considered not risky will not be prosecuted. Spin: Expediency trumps law.

(Look also at the first few paragraphs of “Re-election Strategy Is Tied to a Shift on Smog” and compare the reporting between these two pieces.) The smog article is basically about the politics of a regulatory decision, while the immigration piece mostly avoids this approach. Why do you suppose this is? And then compare with the next piece.) - President Obama reverses the EPA on plan to tighten smog reduction standards. Spin:Special business interests are exerting their influence.

A15 “In Alabama, Calls for Revamping Immigration Law” - In Alabama there is discussion over making the the current anti-immigration less strict; most of the state is opposed to changing the law, however, business interests are pushing for the changes. Spin: Once again, special interests are exerting their influence.

A17 “Would-Be Engineers Hit Books the Hardest, a Study Finds” - There is a correlation between the amount of time students spends studying and their academic discipline. Spin: Many students need to improve their studying skills.

15. Date: November 16, 2011

Business

B1 “Retailers See a Split in Behavior of Shoppers” - Sales on luxury items are increasing while sales on staple items are decreasing. Spin: The income gap between the wealthy and everyone else is widening.

Arts

C1 “Female Comedians, Breaking the Taste-Taboo Ceiling” - Female comedians' have become more risque. Spin: Gender roles are continuing to change.

A13 “A Dispute over Scrub-Covered Islands Reflects Philippine and Chinese Tensions” - Ownership of certain islands is claimed by a number of nations, including China and the Philippines. Spin: As U. S. presence in the western Pacific wanes, tensions in the region will rise.

16. Date: November 21, 2011

A1 “Balancing U.S. Policy on an Ally in Transition” - As the political power struggle in Egypt develops, U.S. policy toward Egypt is uncertain. Spin: Egypt is a powder keg that could explode if the U.S. backs the wrong side.

A20 Learning to Play the Game to Get into College” - Regarding preparation to take the SAT, students "of color" are at a disadvantage when compared to white students. Spin: The SAT is inherently discriminatory.

A22 “Archdiocese to Speak Out at Rally Urging City Council to Pass Bill on Wages” - The Catholic Church is supporting a bill to increase the minimum wage in NYC. Spin: The line separating church and state is becoming fuzzy.

“For the Rich, Cargo Vans on Steroids” - Rich people are driving around in expensively equipped vans. Spin: Further evidence of the gap between the rich and everyone else.

A25 “Abandoned by Parents, Homeless and Now Preparing for College” - A homeless person overcomes many disadvantages to enter college. Spin: Not all homeless people are socially maladjusted.

17. Date: November 28, 2011

A1 “Holiday Sales Break Slump, But It’s Early” - Business was brisk post-Thanksgiving but consumers report that they are still spending less. Spin: The economy is still weak.

A12 “In Gloomy Economic times, Santas Learn to Help by Curbing Expectations” - At schools for Santas, students are being taught to take into consideration families' finances when promising gifts to children. Spin: The economy is still weak.

A24 “Principals Protest Increased Use of Student Test Scores to Evaluate Educators” - Some school principals believe that too much weight is given to results of standardized tests when evaluating performance of schools. Spin: Standardized tests are not a valid basis for evaluating school performance.

A27 “The Politics of Economics in the Age of Shouting” - With the emergence of the internet, more people claiming to be economists are now being heard. Spin: Economic policy is being influenced by people with questionable credentials.

18. Date: November 19, 2011

Science

D1 “Human Nature’s Pathologist” - A psychologist claims that the rate of violence has declined as a response to changes in the environment. Spin: Nurture trumps nature.

A23 “CUNY Trustees Vote for Higher Tuition” - Despite protests, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to raise tuitions. Spin: Protesting is an exercise in futility.

A27 “The Life Reports II - A commentator offers some suggestions on ways to live a fuller and more satisfying life asked based on advice from people over 70. Spin: From experience comes wisdom.

19. Date: November 22, 2011

A23 “CUNY Students Protesting Tuition Increase Clash with Police” (see the video links here and on Youtube) - Protesters at Baruch College were roughed up by the police. Spin: College officials are ignoring the needs of students.

A17 “California’s Campus Movements Dig in Their Heels” - On California state university campuses, protests are annual event, but this year, with the cost of tuition having doubled, the protests are more intense. Spin: College officials are ignoring the needs of students.

A16 “Middle-Class Areas Shrink as Income Gap Grows, New Report Finds” - Middle class incomes are decreasing, transforming middle class areas into low income areas. Spin: Income gap between the wealthy and everyone else continues to widen, creating further polarization along economic lines.

A31 “Letters: Immigrants Without English: Only a Few Thrive” - Without a knowledge of English, access to the the middle class is virtually impossible. Spin: Despite demographic changes, English remains the dominant language in the United States.

20. Date: November 30, 2011

A1 “Line Grows Long for Free Meals at U.S. Schools” - More children are qualifying for free meals. Spin: The economy is worsening.

“Changes in Myanmar Impress Skeptics on Eve of Clinton Trip” - Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, seems to be moving toward democracy. Spin: The changes could be merely cosmetic.

A8 “Qatar’s Capital Glitters Like a World City, but Few Feel at Home” - Qatar's capital has lots of big buildings but no unique identity. Spin: Influx of foreign wealth is changing a country's cultural identity.

A28 “No Money for a Living Wage? But Fat Abounds” - The article is alleging influence-peddling on the part of politicians in the awarding of contracts while at the same time the city is resistant to increasing the minimum wage for workers on the grounds that projects would not be built. Spin: The city can afford to increase the minimum wage.

21. Date: December 1, 2011

A1 “In California, Asking Voters to Raise Taxes” - In California there is an initiative to raise taxes as a way of closing the budget deficit and avoiding further cuts in service. Spin: There is some public support for increasing taxes.

“Camps Are Cleared, but '99 Percent' Still Occupies the Lexicon” - The protest camps are gone but their slogan remains. Spin: Ideas cannot be suppressed.

A25 “The Always Quotable, Not Perfect Gentleman from Massachusetts” - Apparently, Barney Frank has an abrasive personality. Spin: Politicians should be friendly.

A38 “Letters: A Stephen King thriller: What Motivated Oswald?” - The commentator rejects a suggestion that the assassination of JFK may have been politically motivated. Spin: The controversies surrounding the JFK assassination continues unabated.

A39 “A Banker Speaks, with Regret” - A banker admits that he approved a lot of questionable applications for mortgages. Spin: Lending institutions, exercising poor judgment, were responsible for the 2008 financial crisis.

22. Date: December 5, 2011

A1 “Despite Surge, Gingrich Faces Major Hurdles” - Newt Gingrich has surged in the polls but lacks money, organization and the support of some key Republicans. Spin: The question of who will be the Republican nominee for president is far from decided.

A4 “Memo From Istanbul: For Turkey, Lure of Tie to Europe Is Fading” - Turkey wanted to join the EU to be part of the West, but given the weak economy in Europe, is now less interested in joining. Spin: Europe is in decline.

A12 “Lessons in Coping for Children of Deployed” - At a school on a military base, children of soldiers who have been deployed are being taught how to cope with their parent's absence. Spin: The war is placing military families under stress.

A 20 “City Cracking Down on Performers in Washington Square Park” - The city is enforcing regulations on performances in the park which are in effect banning performances. Spin: The purpose of the park is an unsettled question.

23. Date: December 6, 2011

A1 “Many Workers in Public Sector Retiring Sooner - Uncertainty over future is causing many public workers to opt for early retirement.

Spin: Uncertainty over the economy has spilled over into the public sector.

“Aid Agencies in Afghanistan Fear Reversals - Foreign aid to Afghanistan has been cut, putting various projects meant to help the Afghans at risk. Spin: The U.S. may not keep its pledge to help rebuild Afghanistan.

“Online, Police Leveled Abuse at Parade-goers - Racist remarks posted online have been attributed to the police. Spin: The police may require more sensitivity training.

A11 “World Briefing: Greece Erred in Blocking Macedonia’s NATO Bid - The World Court found that Greece allegedly acted contrary to international law in blocking Macedonia joining NATO but it did not bar Greece from repeating said action. Spin: The World Court’s rulings are merely academic.

“Vietnam: More than 100,000 Casualties from Explosives since War Ended - There are still thousands of landmines in Vietnam left from the Vietnam War. Spin: The U.S. has a responsibility to help Vietnam remove landmines.

A22 “The Intrepid Museum Wades into Politics - The Intrepid Museum trustees are being asked to buy tickets for political fund raising event. Spin: Influence peddling under the guise of fund raising.

A23 “In Essay, Cuomo Offers His Case for Amending State’s Tax System, which He Calls Unfair - The governor wants to assess an income tax surcharge on individuals earning over \$200,000 and couples earning over \$300,000 but his proposal is already generating opposition. Spin: Income tax reform will not be happening soon.

24. Date: December 7, 2011

A1 “Reliving Pearl Harbor, One Last Time, Together - The Pearl Harbor Survivors Association will disband after 70 years because most of the members are deceased. Spin: Time marches on and stops for no one, taking with it recollections of even the most tragic events.

“Sectarian Attack Kills At Least 60 in Afghan Cities - Sunnis attacked Shiites throughout Afghanistan. Spin: Despite U.S. involvement, the sectarian conflict continues unabated.

A14 “World Briefing: Afghanistan: Bids Open for Mining in Areas Rich in Gold and Copper - Afghanistan is opening up its land for mining as a way to earn revenue. Spin: Was gaining access to natural resources worth fighting a war?”

A24 “Back at Cubicle after a Break, to Run Somalia - A state civil servant took a ten-month leave of absence to be prime minister of Somalia. Spin: A government worker is a government worker, no matter the country.”

A31 “A Reluctant Enemy - The commentator writes that the chief planner of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Admiral Yamamoto, was also the chief opponent of the attack. Spin: This is revisionist history. The U.S. does not want to start a controversy with Japan who is now an ally.”

25. Date: December 12, 2011

A1 “Lifted by Putin, Middle Class Turns on Him - Prime Minister Putin is losing the support of the constituency that most benefited from his policies. Spin: Putin is out of touch with the Russian electorate.”

A9 “Israeli Plan Cracks Down on Migrants from Africa” - Thousands of Africans looking for work have entered Israel illegally. Spin: The U. S. is not the only country trying to control immigration.

A14 “In Florida, Using Military Discipline to Help Veterans in Prison” - The State of Florida offers a program, based on a military model, for prisoners who are veterans. Spin: Veterans require special programs to help them cope with adjustment issues.

A15 “Military Children Stay a Step Ahead of Public School Students” - Children attending schools on military bases out perform their counterparts in public schools; schools on military bases are exempt from the No Child Left Behind program. Spin: The No Child Left Behind program has needs to be revised.

A23 “Class Matters. Why Won't We Admit It?” - No Child Left Behind did not take into consideration economic differences. Spin: The No Child Left Behind needs to be revised.

26. Date: December 13, 2011

A1 “Court to Weigh Arizona Statute on Immigration” - The Supreme Court will be ruling on a number of high profile cases that could affect the politics of the United States. Spin: As one of the three branches of government, the Supreme Court may hold the balance of power in the 2012 elections.

“Profits and Questions at Online Charter Schools” - Online charter schools are doing well financially but seem to be putting profits ahead of providing a quality education. Spin: Online education of children should not be done.

A20 “In California, Indian Tribes with Casino Money Eject Thousands of Members” - Indian tribes are dis-enrolling thousands of members because they do not have proper ancestry. Spin: The question of who qualifies as being an American Indian needs to be clarified.

Science Times

D3 “In Pursuit of the Perfect Gift? It’s a Lot Closer than You Think” - Recipients of gifts are not impressed by high price tags. Spin: Gift giving should be motivated by the desire to please, not to show off.