

# Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



OCTOBER  
15  
2007



By Si Frumkin

## THE LAWYER, THE BUMPKIN AND THE COWBOY

There is a well known Latin saying that appears to affirm and validate democracy: *Vox populi, Vox Dei – The voice of the people is the voice of God!* I always felt a little bothered by it. If this is so, then what about the popular support of the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Osama bin Laden, Arafat, the despicable Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, and all the rest of the murderers and thugs

It turns out that my skepticism was justified. Actually, the saying does not mean what most of us think it means. The actual quote, by a medieval scholar, Alcuinus, in a letter to Charlemagne, is: *Nec audiendi qui solent dicere, Vox populi, Vox Dei, quum tumultuositas vulgi semper insaniae proxima sit.*

Here is a rough translation in English: *Don't listen to the people who say that the voice of the people is the voice of God - mobs tend to be irrational.* In other words, the voice of the people is **not** the voice of God – just crazy ravings!

I passionately support democracy but I do not believe that policies should be based on opinion polls. The *Vox populi* is not necessarily *Vox Dei*.

Well, the fact is-by the way this reminds me of a STORY!!!



This brings me – finally - to the point of this article: **presidential approval ratings.**

The ratings were

introduced in the 1930s by George Gallup. There were no opinion polls in 1864, when Lincoln, a Republican, faced reelection in the middle of an unpopular and unsuccessful war. Grant's campaign was getting off to a rough and bloody start. The Democrats were willing to negotiate peace without victory – accepting the continuation of slavery and recognition of secession by the South. This was not what the majority of the northerners wanted but it seemed as the best that they could get. Two generals who had been fired by Lincoln were striving for the presi-

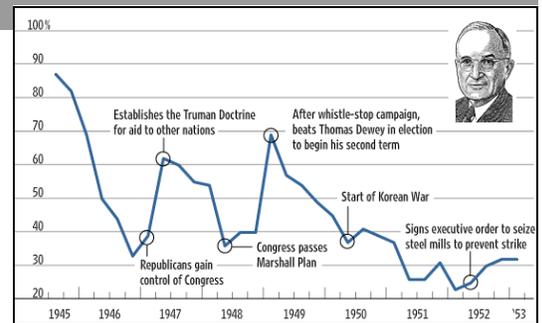
dency, several members of Lincoln's cabinet openly sabotaged his campaign, and Lincoln's nomination by the Republican party was far from certain.

Lincoln was so aware of his growing unpopularity that he even wrote a letter to the "next President" promising his cooperation in finishing the war and saving the Union. Had opinion polls existed in 1864 they would have certainly shown a Lincoln approval rating of less than 30%. The media of the day printed cartoons of an ape-like Lincoln and stories of his ignorance, incompetence and total unsuitability to be President.

Then, as the election neared, the war turned around. Sherman captured and burned Atlanta, Sheridan won at Shenandoah, and the Union navy was victorious at sea. Lincoln was nominated and the electorate, its confidence restored, gave Lincoln a solid 55% of the vote. History – and current *Vox populi* - now recognizes Lincoln as one of the greatest American presidents.

Harry Truman, is also a President held by historians to have been among the 3 or 4 great ones. But Truman holds another record: the lowest approval rating, in 1952, of any President since the ratings' introduction – 22%!

The American *populi* in 1952 were tired of the Korean War, outraged at his strike-breaking of steel workers and the firing of General MacArthur and his apparently senseless foreign policy. He had never gone to college, had a background as a farmer, a bankrupt small businessman, a provincial politician and was assumed not to be fully aware of the large picture. His first electoral victory was assumed to be a fluke – a major newspaper even went to press with a headline announcing the victory of Dewey, his opponent. During his last 3 years in office, Truman's approval rating never went above



the low 30s.

So much for the *Vox populi*.

The low Truman approval ratings mirror those of George W. Bush whose approval ratings during his second term have not moved above the low thirties. There are other uncanny similarities: both Truman and George W. started and unflinchingly backed unpopular wars, both lost their parties control of Congress, both were criticized as unsophisticated, lacking in scholarship and language skills, even though W's educational background and earned grades are higher than those of his past Democratic rivals. Both presidents were unwilling to take the advice of the self-important intellectual and informational elites, driving them into paroxysms of fury for being ignored by a country bumpkin – Truman – and a wild uncivilized cowboy – Bush.

Parenthetically, in addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest approval rating (Nixon is 2<sup>nd</sup> with 23% during the Watergate scandal), Bush also holds the record for the highest approval rating ever: 93%, shortly after the 9/11 attacks.

A parting thought. I would be willing to give anything to be able to see what future historians will have to say about the George W. Bush presidency. I strongly suspect that there is a good chance of his being in Lincoln's and Truman's company. ●

# AM I REALLY A CONSERVATIVE?

(I agree with Burt almost 100%. I just wish I had written this article. Ah, well... S.F.)

By Burt Prelutsky, 8/31/07

Every so often I hear from a self-anointed right-wing commissar that I'm not really a conservative simply because he's disagreed with something I wrote. The most annoying aspect of being called on the carpet is that it serves to remind me that some of those on the right can be every bit as dogmatic and self-righteous as the pinheads on the left.

So, I will now list my core beliefs and you can all decide for yourselves whether when I claim to be a conservative, I'm guilty of misrepresentation.

For openers, I'm in favor of capital punishment. The sixth commandment, by the way, doesn't really say that thou shalt not kill. When correctly translated, it states that thou shalt not murder. I can not imagine how anybody can argue that a person who commits cold-blooded homicide is entitled to out-live his innocent victim by 40 or 50 years.



Next, I do not understand why a so-called civilized society allows pedophiles to run loose. It always confounds me that so many on the right seem so much more concerned with the safety of embryos

than they are with protecting actual children. I, for one, do not regard electronic monitors or court orders dictating how many yards from schools, parks and playgrounds, these perverts are allowed to come, as appropriate safeguards. What I regard as appropriate would be a dungeon or, better yet, a cemetery plot.

Speaking of the legal system, I do not believe that criminal defense attorneys should be encouraged or even permitted to invent any number of implausible theories as a means to confuse juries unless they swear on



a Bible that they themselves actually believe that the rape or murder was committed by members of a Colombian drug cartel, an Albanian albino or a gang of Martians.

Furthermore, as a conservative, I believe in school vouchers. I can't be the only person who's sick and tired of listening to liberal politicians praising public education to the heavens while, at the same time, they've got their own children safely ensconced in private schools.

I am opposed to foreign aid. There are only a small handful of nations we can honestly regard as allies. Why on earth should we send billions of our tax dollars to the rest or underwrite the U.N., a haven for thousands of scoundrels who definitely have no business living in a glass house.

I wish I didn't ever again have to listen to people prattle on about the mortality rate in this country, implying that we'd all live much longer if only we had socialized medicine, otherwise known as universal health care. The only reason we don't all live to be 100 is either because we are cursed with inferior genes or because we eat and smoke too much. Heck, when you factor in drugs, booze and the way most of us drive, it's a wonder so many of us even survive our twenties.

As a conservative, I know what my position on abortions is supposed to be, but, frankly, in this day and age of the Pill and all the other readily available contraceptive products, I have no idea why it even remains an issue. It just seems to me that unwanted pregnancies, like AIDS and other STDs, are easily prevented, and it's high time we simply moved on.

I am for doing whatever it takes to close the borders and for utilizing nuclear energy. The former would go a long way to improving the quality of life here in America and the latter would free us of our dependence on places like Saudi Arabia and people like Hugo Chavez.

I oppose the federal government's misguided attempts at social engineering and I would do away with dual-citizenship and bilingual education. While I was at it, I would place the ACLU on the attorney general's list of terrorist organizations.

I would make English our official language, and I would out-law all those things that require you to hit button #1 for English, #2 for Spanish. Is there, I ask you, a single Spanish-speaking nation on the face of the earth that employs similar devices?



I would acknowledge that a state of war exists between Islamic fundamentalism and the civilized world, and I would do whatever is required to win it.

Before signing off, I wish to make it clear that I'm explaining my credentials as a conservative, not as a Republican. There's no reason at all to boast

about belonging to a party that saw the Republicans in Washington trying to suck up to the Democrats for the first six years of Bush's administration. Just thinking about John McCain and his Gang of 14 is enough to make me gag.

The only reason I have for voting for people with (R) after their name is because those with (D) somehow manage to be even worse.

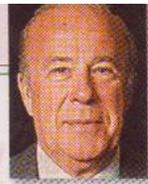
Finally, because I'm not just a conservative, but a dog-loving conservative, I'm disgusted that Michael Vick, a vile thug if ever there was one, was allowed to plea bargain his way out of the sentence he deserved. Forget prison. If it had

been up to me, he would have been driven to the local vet to be fixed. ☆

W. Burt Prelutsky is an accomplished, well-rounded writer and author of [Conservatives Are from Mars \(Liberals Are from San Francisco\): 101 Reasons I'm Happy I Left the Left.](#)



By George P. Shultz



## The 'Israel Lobby' Myth

**I**SRAEL IS A FREE, DEMOCRATIC, OPEN, AND relentlessly self-analytical place. To hear harsh criticism of Israel's policies and leaders, listen to the Israelis. So questioning Israel for its actions is legitimate, but lies are something else. Throughout human history, they have been used not only to vilify but to establish a basis for cruel and inhuman acts. The catalog of lies about Jews is long and astonishingly crude, matched only by the suffering that has followed their promulgation.

Defaming the Jews by disputing their rightful place among the peoples of the world has been a long-running, well-documented, and disgraceful series of episodes across history. Again and again a time has come when legitimate criticism slips across an invisible line into what might be called the "badlands," a place where those who should be regarded as worthy adversaries in debate are turned into scapegoats, targets, all-purpose objects of blame.

In America, we protect all speech, even the most hurtful lies. We allow a virtual free-for-all by which laws are adopted, enforced, and interpreted. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent yearly to influence this process; thousands of groups vie for influence. Among these are Jewish groups that have come under renewed criticism for being part of an all-powerful "Israel lobby," most notably in a book published this week by Profs. Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer.

Jewish groups are influential. They also largely agree that the United States should support Israel. But the notion that they have anything like a uniform agenda and that U.S. policy in Israel and the Middle East is the result of this influence is simply wrong.

**One choice.** Some critics seem overly impressed with the way of thinking that says to itself, "Since there is a huge Arab Islamic world out there with all the oil, and it is opposed to this tiny little Israel with no natural resources, then realistically the United States has to be on the Arab side and against Israel on every issue, and since this isn't the case, there must be some underhanded Jewish plot at work." This is a conspiracy theory, pure and simple.

Another tried and true method for damaging the well-being and security of the Jewish people and the State of Israel is a dangerously false analogy. Witness former President Jimmy Carter's book *Palestine—Peace Not Apartheid*. Here the association on the one hand is between Israel's existentially threatened position and the measures it has taken to protect its population from ter-

rorist attacks, driven by an ideology bent on the complete eradication of the State of Israel, and, on the other, the racist oppression of South Africa's black population by the white Boer regime.

The tendency of mind that lies behind such repulsive analogies remains and is reinforced by the former president's views, spread across his book, which come down on the anti-Israel side of every case. These false analogies stir up and lend legitimacy to more widely based movements that take the same dangerous direction.

Anyone who thinks that Jewish groups constitute a homogeneous "lobby" ought to spend some time dealing with them. For example, my decision to open a dialogue with Yasser Arafat after he met certain conditions evoked a wide spectrum of responses from the government of Israel, its political parties, and American Jewish groups who weighed in on one side or the other. Other examples in which the United States rejected Israel's view of an issue, or the view of the American Jewish community, include the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia and President Reagan's decision to go to the cemetery at Bit-

burg, Germany.

The United States supports Israel not because of favoritism based on political pres-

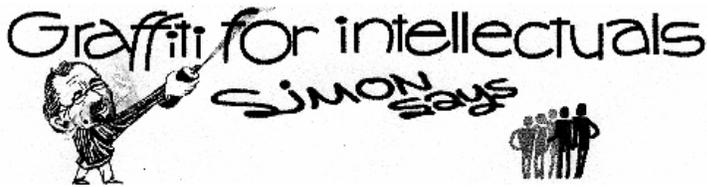
sure or influence but because the American people, and their leaders, say that supporting Israel is politically sound and morally just.

We are a great nation. Mostly, we make good decisions. We are not babes in the woods. We act in our own interests. And when we mistakenly conclude from time to time—as we will—that an action or policy is in America's interest, we must take responsibility for the mistake.

So, on every level, those who blame Israel and its Jewish supporters for U.S. policies they do not support are wrong. They are wrong because, to begin with, support for Israel is in our best interests. They are also wrong because Israel and its supporters have the right to try to influence U.S. policy. And they are wrong because the U.S. government is responsible for the policies it adopts, not any other state or any of the myriad lobbies and groups that battle daily—sometimes with lies—to win America's support. ●

*George Shultz was secretary of state from 1982 to 1989. This is excerpted from his introduction to The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control by Abraham Foxman (Palgrave Macmillan).*

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## LOOKING FOR SCAPEGOATS, THE WORLD AGAIN TURNS TO JEWS Victor Hanson, 9/2007

WHO RECENTLY SAID: "THESE JEWS STARTED 19 CRUSADES. THE 19TH WAS WORLD WAR 1. WHY? ONLY TO BUILD ISRAEL." SOME HOLD OVER NAZI?

Hardly. It was former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of Turkey, a NATO ally. He went on to claim that the Jews — whom he refers to as "bacteria" — controlled China, India, and Japan, and ran the United States. Who alleged: "The Arabs who were involved in 9/11 cooperated with the Zionists, actually. It was a cooperation. They gave them the perfect excuse to denounce all Arabs." A conspiracy nut?

Actually, it was former Democratic U.S. Sen. James Abourezk of South Dakota. He denounced Israel on a Hezbollah-owned television station, adding: "I marveled at the Hezbollah resistance to Israel. . . . It was a marvel of organization, of courage and bravery." And finally, who claimed at a United Nations-sponsored conference that democratic Israel was "much worse" than the former apartheid South Africa, and that it "undermines the international community's reaction to global warming"?

A radical environmentalist wacko? Again, no. It was Clare Short, a member of the British parliament. She was a secretary for international development under Prime Minister Tony Blair.

A new virulent strain of the old anti-Semitism is spreading worldwide. This hate — of a magnitude not seen in over 70 years — is not just espoused by Iran's loony president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or radical jihadists.

The latest anti-Semitism is also now mouthed by world leaders and sophisticated politicians and academics. Their loathing often masquerades as "anti-Zionism" or

"legitimate" criticism of Israel. But the venom exclusively reserved for the Jewish state betrays their existential hatred.

Israel is always lambasted for entering homes in the West Bank to look for Hamas terrorists and using too much force. But last week the world snoozed when the Lebanese army bombarded and then crushed the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, which harbored Islamic terrorists.

The world has long objected to Jewish settlers buying up land in the West Bank. Yet Hezbollah, flush with Iranian money, is now purchasing large tracts in southern Lebanon for military purposes and purging them of non-Shiites.

Here at home, "neoconservative" has become synonymous with a supposed Jewish cabal of Washington insiders who hijacked U.S. policy to take us to war for Israel's interest. That our state department is at the mercy of a Jewish lobby is the theme of a recent high-profile book by professors at Harvard University and the University of Chicago. Yet when the United States bombed European and Christian Serbia to help Balkan Muslims, few critics alleged that American Muslims had unduly swayed President Clinton. And such charges of improper ethnic influence are rarely leveled to explain the billions in American aid given to non-democratic Egypt, Jordan, or the Palestinians — or the Saudi oil money that pours into American universities.

The world likewise displays such a double standard. It seems to care little about the principle of so-called occupied land — whether in Cyprus or Tibet — unless Israel is the accused. Mass murdering in Cambodia, the Congo, Rwanda, and Darfur has earned far fewer United Nations' resolutions of condemnation than supposed atrocities commit-

ted by Israel. A number of British academics are sponsoring a boycott of Israeli scholars but leave alone those from autocratic Iran, China, and Cuba.

There are various explanations for the new anti-Semitism. For many abroad, attacking Jews and Israel is an indirect way of damning its main ally, the United States — by implying that Americans are not entirely evil, just hoodwinked by those sneaky and far more evil Jews

At home, there are obvious pragmatic considerations. Some Americans may find it makes more sense to damn a few million Israelis without oil than it does to offend Israel's adversaries in the Middle East, who number in the hundreds of millions and control nearly half the world's petroleum reserves.

Cowardice explains a lot. Libeling Israel won't earn someone a fatwa or a death sentence in the manner comparable criticism of Islam might. There are no Jewish suicide bombers in London, Madrid, or Bali.

This new face of anti-Semitism is so insidious because it is so well disguised, advanced by self-proclaimed diplomats and academics — and now embraced by the supposedly sophisticated left on university campuses.

When national, collective or personal aspirations are not met, it is far easier to blame someone or something rather than to look within for the source of the failure and frustration. More recently, someone must be blamed for getting terrorists (with oil and its profits behind them) mad at us.

That someone is — no surprise — once again Jews. ☆