Cambridge 02138

Governing Harvard, the end of a presidency, costs of war

THE POWER PROBLEM
Part of the problem in energizing a passive public about the carbon problem is that the term “global warming” is too tame. It hasn’t motivated people like me to acknowledge the severity and immediacy, yet solubility, of the problem. In his article highlighting Professor Daniel Schrag’s work (“Fueling Our Future,” May-June, page 40), Jonathan Shaw hits the nail on the head when he writes, “Even forecasts of disastrous effects for the human sphere…have thus far failed to mobilize public action in the United States.” It’s time we dump this teddy-bear concept of global warming and use the more precise and ominous term “global flooding” when speaking or writing of the growing potential for coastal disasters.

I plan to send a note to friends and influence leaders requesting that they download the PDF of this fine article [www.harvardmagazine.com/lib/06mj/pdf/0506-40.pdf] and join me in extending its reach. I believe Schrag when he says, “The only thing missing from a solution to the carbon problem is the will to act.”

ROBERT LEWIS, M.B.A. ’70
Buena Vista, Colo.

Climate change is an exceedingly complex problem, and Shaw did an excellent job of explaining the challenge that confronts us. I share Schrag’s optimism that we can address it. However, this will happen only if we provide economic incentives to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. Fortunately, our experience with the Kyoto Protocol and the EU Emissions Trading System has demonstrated that incentives to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide are welcome, but we must take to combat climate change is to establish a financial market-based incentive for companies to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. This will spark innovative response that will implement the solutions described in your article, and many others that have yet to be designed.

BRUCE M. USHER, M.B.A. ’92
CEO, EcoSecurities Group
New York City

I am not certain why Schrag immediately thinks government action is required. Government is incompetent. For such matters as defense and protecting inalienable rights, government is almost the only option. For everything else, I’m just surprised that people still believe that government efforts to do something
I appreciated nowhere in sight. The solutions to today’s initiative and their “plug-in” hybrid vehicle, Prius*, or to the X Prize? Government is nowhere in sight. The solutions to today’s energy problems will come from folks like them.

Ivan Kirigin
Somerville, Mass.

I appreciated the juxtaposition of H. Bradford Washburn’s and David Arnold’s photographs documenting global climate change (“A Melting World,” May-June, page 36) and Shaw’s report on Schrag and the Wednesday-morning meeting of highly educated people to discuss the same topic. I was distressed, however, that in Shaw’s article—and, presumably, in the group’s discussions—conservation and lifestyle changes to reduce the energy used by affluent North Americans got such short shrift. It is true that conservation and efficiency can’t reduce demand to zero, but it is also true that not everyone can afford that luxury. Conservation and lifestyle matters. It is true that conservation and efficiency can’t reduce demand to zero, but it is also true that not everyone can afford that luxury. Conservation and lifestyle matters. It is true that conservation and efficiency can’t reduce demand to zero, but it is also true that not everyone can afford that luxury. Conservation and lifestyle matters. It is true that conservation and efficiency can’t reduce demand to zero, but it is also true that not everyone can afford that luxury. Conservation and lifestyle matters.

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I was struck by the further ironic juxtaposition of these two articles and the pages immediately following: an advertising spread designed to persuade affluent Harvard graduates to jet around the world for luxury vacations. Other ads in the magazine reveal further signs of an energy-expensive lifestyle.

Perhaps it is easier for your readers to nod approvingly at a huge increase in coal-fired and nuclear-powered generating plants than to consider the alternative: changing our own lifestyles. To use Schrag’s term, the lifestyle of affluent North Americans is not “scalable.” To preserve human life on the planet, we in the United States simply must cut back at least to, say, the ecological footprint of the average Scandinavian. Assuming an exponentially increasing demand, coupled with exponentially increasing global population, as Schrag and his colleagues have done, is a recipe only for disaster.

Elizabeth Cazden, J.D. ’78
Provence, R.I.

I read with great interest your article about the imperative to rapidly develop and build a new fleet of integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) coal-fired power plants in the United States and around the globe. I am the general counsel at Excelsior Energy in Minnesota. Our company was founded by Thomas A. Mieheletti ’69, and our corporate mission is to develop and build the first large-scale IGCC power plants in the nation in northeastern Minnesota. Our website provides much information about our Mesaba Energy Project. It is gratifying to see thoughtful articles such as yours validating everything that we are trying to do here in Minnesota. In addition to potentially addressing the CO₂ issues you highlight, IGCC also produces significantly less fine particulate matter than conventional coal plants, reducing adverse human health impacts.

Thomas L. Osteraa ’88
Minnetonka, Minn.

When I was a geology concentrator at Harvard, one class studied the Yucca Mountain, Nevada, plan. What I learned was that nuclear-waste disposal is not a problem to be brushed aside (as your article does), but an insurmountable problem with the entire technology. At present, as far as I am aware, the costs of nuclear-waste disposal (construction, insurance, and others) are borne by the federal government, and the public-health risks are borne by groups near the repositories who are systematically disenfranchised to
protect the nuclear-industry operators, making the true costs of nuclear power even more awful than they already are.

As for “clean” coal technology, your article made no mention of the environmental and social costs of mountaintop-removal, the preferred method of coal mining. All across the Appalachians, entire ecosystems are being destroyed, species are driven to extinction, and catastrophic flooding (often containing toxic sludge) has increased. Fifty percent of the rivers in Kentucky are now unsafe for swimming. At the same time, this extractive industry leaves these areas among the poorest in the nation, without jobs or opportunities for advancement. And this is what environmental scientists would embrace?

Raphael Sperry ’95
San Francisco

It has been wonderful living in the petroleum age. Energy consumption has made life grand for the most number of people ever. But the time has come to pay the piper. The work done by Schrag shows the impossibility of the continuation of our present lifestyle.

What concerns me about his work is that the subject of population change apparently has no place. Reduce population and the amount of energy consumed and pollution created could go down. (The changes he suggests will still need to be made.) World population should decrease by 50 percent to 75 percent. In places such as China, India, Haiti, and many African areas, a 90 percent drop is needed, and in the United States the drop should be at least 50 percent; 60 percent to 70 percent would be better. Such a change might give our planet a chance.

Raphael Sperry ’95
San Francisco

What are the chances of such changes being brought about by humans? Very close to zero. But maybe attitudes will change before it is too late. If they do not, Mother Nature will make the change for us.

Harlan A. Bentzinger, M.B.A. ’48
Edinburg, Tex.

GOVERNING HARVARD
Your roundtable discussion “Governing Harvard” (May-June, page 25) was very welcome. It shed some light on the arcane procedures of the Corporation, and also raised old questions. Does the Corporation really act as a governing board, or are they just an advisory board to the president? (Clearly they act, as they are doing now, when it is time to change presidents, and they did at least set some goals for Lawrence H. Summers when he first took office as president.) In either case they bear responsibility for letting Summers behave in a way that alienated the faculty.

A board cannot govern effectively without active committees, and a board of seven members cannot staff many committees. Perhaps they can rely on the very well organized committees of the Overseers, and your article shows that they do send representatives to join those committees from time to time. But the overall sense I gained is that the Corporation has a very loose structure with few formal procedures. Perhaps that is why they failed.

Richard H. Snow ’50
Chicago

I am concerned about a sense of complacency that I found in a number of the comments—that, all things considered, the system works pretty well. I did not read, for example, enough concern about the quality of education at Harvard. I interview applicants to the College, and I am constantly aware of the competition from other colleges (by chance, I live next door to Princeton). I think it would be very unfortunate if Harvard attracts the most talented body of students, but does not offer them the best education. Harvard cannot afford to rest on her laurels.

I also was disappointed by the deprecatory comment about the Board of Overseers: “...they're all elected, often based on name recognition and/or through a well-

ARTS, AND ON-LINE NEWS
Beginning this fall, Harvard Magazine will expand its coverage of arts, culture, and creativity, as practiced by alumni, faculty, and students. We welcome ideas and suggestions at arts@harvardmag.com.

For coverage of breaking news at Harvard, the editors invite you to visit the magazine’s website, www.harvardmagazine.com. There you may also register for “Editor’s Highlights,” a summary of the contents of each new issue, e-mailed just as it is posted on the website.

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organized get-out-the-vote campaign.” If Harvard alumni cannot be trusted to be thoughtful and to have the best interests of the University at heart when voting for Overseers, then one really has to worry about democracy. Perhaps the election of Overseers does need to be improved, but I think one has to start from the understanding that we alumni want the University to remain great.

John F. Schivell ’63, Ph.D. ’68
Princeton, N.J.

The roundtable presented a timely discussion by knowledgeable participants, but it left doubt on some important issues. Regarding the move to expand in Allston, Professor Jay W. Lorsch asked, “Has the Corporation or anybody else around here stopped to ask the question, ‘Why should Harvard be bigger?’” There may be a case to be made for a major expansion, but, if so, it has been and remains a secret. The roundtable participants did not know whether the expansion question had been vetted by the Corporation. “I am sure they have” is not a satisfactory explanation. Lorsch asked: “If [expansion] is a good idea, why isn’t the rationale for why the College should be larger communicated to the public?”

Henry H. Moulton ’46
Cambridge

The end of a presidency
Taking in the gripping story of the end of President Lawrence H. Summers’s reign (“A Presidency’s Early End,” May-June, page 59), a host of questions come to my mind. Maybe this upset is an opportunity to rethink.

Why not attempt to rehire all the good folks that Summers fired, starting with Faculty of Arts and Sciences dean William C. Kirby? Are there no second acts in Harvard careers? Is Summers’s coming University Professorship a fluke?

Re Allston: After reading paragraph after paragraph about loose ends, I wonder why interim president Derek Bok is all set to give a go-ahead to the projects there? Why not a halt to all progress in Allston until a lot of things get thought out?

What is the role of centralization versus autonomy of departments? What is the role of organic growth? Is a balance between metastasizing sciences and the humanities possible? One of the faculty has suggested the University not as one great vessel, but a flotilla with a lead vessel. Is there wisdom in this metaphor?

What does Harvard owe the community? What other uses, such as affordable housing, or green space, might be appropriate to include in Allston?

Should we fear great power and great money concentrated? In sum, will Harvard’s determination to be the Greatest University on Earth and Beyond pose a danger to its being a great university?

When properly organized and led with integrity, and when enough time is taken, communities can make better decisions than lone individuals or groups. Why not involve the whole University in remaking itself over a five-year study, and plant vegetables in Allston in the meantime?

Thomas C. Blandy ’54, M.Arch. ’60
Troy, N.Y.

For the past 12 years I have been the alumnus who interviews Harvard applicants from southeastern Indiana. After seeing how the Arts and Sciences faculty treated Summers, I’m afraid that I can no longer assist or encourage high-school students to attend a university where political correctness appears to be the main criterion for employment. It appears that dissenting ideas are no longer tolerated at Harvard. Nonconformists with unpopular opinions are censured and silenced. Farewell to the Harvard we older alumni experienced. It was good knowing you.

Lewis J. Chizer ’53
Lawrenceburg, Ind.

Your news report was illuminating about the reign of Lawrence H. Summers and what a diverse group of faculty members had to say about his tenure, and brave on a very informative roundtable about Harvard governance. As an outsider and retired academic, my take on Summers is that he is a “control freak” who is a very good broadcaster.

ERRATA

The official short form for the California Institute of Technology is “Cal Tech,” not “Cal Tech,” as given in “Gender Gains” (May-June, page 70).

In “Weighing In” (May-June, page 60), Professor Andrew Gordon is identified, in part, as “co-chair” of the caucus of FAS chairs. He should have been identified as co-coordinator.
and poor listener. The bottom line is that he was a “bully” leader, and most of the ideas concerning a revised undergraduate curriculum and the development of the Allston campus were mostly in place before he arrived.

Robert Ackerberg, Ph.D. ’63
Massapequa, N.Y.

The presidency of Summers has been an unmitigated disaster for Harvard. He represents the mediocrity that is so prevalent in America today. When I compare the great Franklin D. Roosevelt with the unbelievable mediocrity sitting in the White House today, I realize how far down the road we have traveled as a nation.

I hope the next president of Harvard will be a man of great intelligence and integrity. We are the greatest university in America and deserve only the best.

Eric Sokolsky ’48
Los Angeles

DIVINITY SCHOOL DAYS
While I welcome Ann Braude’s historic review on the changing role of women in Harvard Divinity School during the past 50 years (“A Shift in the Created Order,” May-June, page 54), I must take issue with her dismissal of the school’s faculty during the 1940s and early 1950s as being “moribund” and her claim that during the time that Willard Sperry was dean the school “offered no professional training in ministry, nor even academic training in the fields of theology or ethics in the modern world.” She evidently fails to appreciate or give appropriate recognition to the academic and scholarly excellence that prevailed to prepare graduates entering the professions of either teaching or ministry or both. As one who received his preparation for ministry (and for teaching) from such eminent scholars and faculty members as Henry Joel Cadbury, Robert H. Pfeiffer, George Hunston Williams, Johannes Auer, Arthur Darby Nock, Rollin Fairbanks, all under the administration, wise counsel, and pastoral guidance of Dean Sperry, I have been profoundly grateful for an education that has served me well throughout my life and ministry.

Viewing Harvard Divinity School’s history through the lens of gender is certainly appropriate, but it should not blind Braude and her students to Harvard’s renowned... (please turn to page 87)
LETTERS (continued from page 9)

standards of academic excellence, both past and present.

REV. HERBERT B. PERRY, S.T.B. ’53
Lyndonville, Vt.

ADMISSIONS

The review of The Chosen (“The Browser,” May-June, page 17) nicely points out the tension between efforts to enroll students representative of our society, provide equal opportunity and access to all students, and recognize merit (however defined) in the admissions process.

The reviewer quotes the following sentence: “[B]y conventional definitions, the privileged are the meritorious; of all students nationwide scoring over 1300 on the SAT, 66 percent come from the top socioeconomic quartile and only 3 percent from the bottom quartile.”

How ironic that on the page directly opposite this quote there is an advertisement for a “college application boot camp” at which rising high-school seniors are counseled on their college applications. Such intensive college-application counseling might well be a boon for rising high-school seniors and their parents. However, college-application boot camps, SAT prep courses, and the counseling provided students at elite high schools serve only to exacerbate the disparities inherent in today’s college-admissions process.

R. LAWRENCE DESSEM, J.D. ’76
Dean, School of Law
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Mo.

THE COST OF THE WAR

LINDA BILMES of the Kennedy School and Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz of Columbia, cited by Craig Lambert in “The $2-Trillion War” (May-June, page 12), play fast and loose with many facts. For example, they conveniently blame the rising price of crude oil on the war and attribute “$5 or $10” a barrel to it. They then multiply that by the total oil imports to the United States and get $50 billion a year extra cost to us all. They fail to take into account that there are two huge economies, China and India, out there sucking up more oil than we ever imagined, and that Canada and Mexico export twice the oil to the United States that the entire Middle East does. (In fact, we get 60 percent more hydrocarbons from Canada than Saudi Arabia, so why aren’t we mad at those evil Canadians ripping us off?) They also fail to note that Iraq is insignificant in terms of world supply, having exported almost no oil before 1996 and still only about 2 percent. Even so, Iraq’s oil exports in 2005 were down only by about 68,000 barrels per day from pre-war 2002. Against world crude oil production of about 80 million barrels per day, it’s pretty hard to blame Iraq for a worldwide price run-up.

BRIAN BARBATA, M.B.A. ’75
Kailua, Hawaii

Stiglitz and Bilmes reply: The oil market is a global market, affected by global demands and supplies. At any point, the price represents a balancing of demand and supply. As we point out in our paper, the direct impact of the reduction in supplies from Iraq is limited. Our point is a simple one: Normally, supplies respond to increasing demands, particularly anticipated increases. Most of the growth of China and other emerging markets was widely anticipated, but, despite that, before the war the market anticipated relatively stable prices. Supplies were anticipated to respond to these increases in demands. The Middle East has vast reservoirs of oil and is the world’s low-cost producer. The single most important interruption to the normal workings of the market was the war in Iraq, which led to enormous instability in the Middle East. It is this which accounts for most of the huge run-up in the price, but nonetheless we attribute only $5 a barrel in our conservative scenario. It is worth contrasting what has happened with what some from the Bush administration said before war: they anticipated that the war was the best way of ensuring a stable low price for oil.

HARVARD-YENCHING SUCCESSES

As someone familiar, over the years, with the Harvard-Yenching Institute, and feeling, especially, a sense of deep gratitude for the many warm associations with the visiting scholars I have met through its auspices, I wish to add a comment to an otherwise comprehensive article on the institute (“Where East Meets West,” January-February, page 67). The “meeting” part of the institute’s programs has been a remarkable success because of its dedicated and effective staff. As associate director, Edward Baker traveled every year, for 25 years, on journeys that would last six weeks or more, through Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and Vietnam to interview candidates, and, back in Cambridge, organized a wide variety of academic fora to bring the visiting scholars into the Harvard-Yenching community. Susan Alport has administered the Institute office for more than eight years, helping to assure that in logistical and other matters, the scholars in residence are properly cared for.

DAVID R. McCANN, Ph.D. ’76
Korea Foundation professor of Korean literature
Director, Korea Institute
Cambridge

BROWNING MACHINE GUN

ROGER ANGELL’S appreciative fascination with the Browning “fifty-cal” machine gun (“Open Book,” May-June, page 20) may be more widely shared. He writes in his memoir that he imagined teaching his former professor about this boner-mounted cannon, pointing out “the belt feed lever” and the “belt feed pawl” at the end of a lengthy catalog of components. The late Richard Eberhart, who did graduate studies at Harvard before serving in the Second World War like Angell, concludes his classic war poem “The Fury of Aerial Bombardment” with the lines:

_... Of Van Wettering I speak, and Averill,
Names on a list, whose faces I do not recall
But they are gone to early death, who
 late in school Distinguished the belt feed lever from
the belt holding pawl._

Reading Angell and Eberhart, I found that, years after my own military service, my recollection of the arcane nomenclature of the parts and functioning of the Browning M2 is surprisingly clear. Whether this is to the credit of a good instructor I once had, or the remarkable design of this dark machine, I cannot say.

KALEV SEPP, Ph.D. ’02
Carmel Valley, Calif.

SPEAK UP, PLEASE

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