

peting theories will fail due to the impossibility of an uniting meta-perspective and because of the (related) nonexistence of a universal language. How to proceed, then?

Good question.

Ralph A. Raimi is a professor of mathematics at the University of Rochester.

POLITICS

Merry Kwanzaa

by Nicholas Stix

What are you doing this year for Kwanzaa? This was once a ludicrous question, but in today's urban America public agencies, newspapers, and businesses trip over themselves showing their unqualified support for this anomalous occasion. Presented now as a religious, if not a national event, Kwanzaa immediately follows the "Judeo-Christian" holidays. It is one thing to wear mismatched socks, and another altogether to mix and match politics and religion. After all, those who have most vociferously supported Kwanzaa's establishment are the same folks, white and black, who are always on the lookout for displays of religious faith as benign as a menorah or Christmas tree in a public square.

Kwanzaa is so established in government-sanctioned public life that an otherwise valuable, remedial writing textbook, *Evergreen*, reports that "Maulana Karenga introduced Kwanzaa to America in 1966." Kwanzaa was not introduced to, but invented in America by Karenga (a/k/a Ron Everett). It is one of those pseudo-African practices, like naming children "Tawana" or "Lakeisha," or wearing "crown" caps, that confirm real Africans' worst misgivings about American blacks.

Kwanzaa exists to enhance black Americans' self-esteem via a zero-sum calculus that requires them to insult "European Americans." The very term "African American" bespeaks superiority

to its black users; "European American" is a half-educated obscurantist's version of "honkey." As per philosopher C.I. Stevenson's concept of "persuasive definitions," Afrocentrists seek to impose terms of discourse that confirm their beliefs without the need to argue them.

In December 1994, a columnist in Harlem's *Amsterdam News*, New York's oldest black newspaper, complained that commercialism had soiled Kwanzaa's purity. Conversely, in his 1994 pamphlet "Kwanzaa," Harlem community activist Cedric McClester gave "a special thanks to Mr. Jose Ferrer, a true marketing genius and a living example of the Kwanzaa principles":

The true significance of Kwanzaa lies in the seven principles it is based on. Unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith are not only good principles to live by, they are also universally recognized as proper guides for cohesive socialization.

Most Afrocentric statements of faith are meant to be taken literally by white devils, but read "Black" by "Africans." If the seven principles of Kwanzaa were "universally recognized," there would be no need to state them, and they would be out of place in a specifically black celebration couched in East African Kiswahili ("Umoja, Kugichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Juumba, and Imani"). One hears always from black nationalist leaders and their "progressive" white stooges of the need for "unity against those who would divide us," as if Martians were coming from outer space to break an indivisible human solidarity. The solidarity, of course, is that of black nationalists against whites—and black opponents. It never occurs to black nationalists' white supporters that they play the role of "Uncle Toms," prostrating themselves before those who hate them because of their skin color.

White "liberals" demand respect for blacks' "right to self-definition." Fair enough—if blacks want to celebrate Kwanzaa privately. But as part of a consciously anti-Christian movement, Kwanzaa owes what popularity it enjoys entirely to its having been imposed on children, black and nonblack alike, through public schools and publicly

funded agencies, often with the help of powerful whites. Not only is its establishment unconstitutional, but liberals who denounce every attempt to reintroduce public school prayer have been curiously quiet regarding the state establishment of Kwanzaa. Apparently, some self-definitions are more equal than others.

McClester claims that Ron Everett/Maulana Karenga's invention, which "began as a cultural idea . . . blossomed into the only nationally celebrated, indigenous, non-religious, non-heroic, non-political African-American holiday." That's a lot of "non's." Just before denying that Kwanzaa is a religious holiday, McClester praises Allah. Immediately after denying that it is a political holiday, he describes Kwanzaa as "an expression of [Everett's] nationalist Us organization." He denies that Kwanzaa is a "Christmas substitute," only to note that "Dr. Karenga recognized the undue hardship that the overcommercialization of Christmas has for black people and others who are at the lowest rung of the social strata. Therefore, those who find Kwanzaa to be more meaningful to them, now have an option and can still be part of the holiday season." Are we to believe it is a mere coincidence that Everett/Karenga chose the week of December 26-January 1 to celebrate Kwanzaa?

In other words, no matter how one views it, Kwanzaa poses problems. If Kwanzaa is political, why should Americans recognize a holiday not the property of all the people? And if Kwanzaa is religious, then it has no claim on public propagation, unless other religions get parity.

To be sure, for most black nationalists Kwanzaa and the Afrocentric counterculture it is a part of represent little more than fast-buck schemes. However, for Kwanzaa's empire-building founder and his politically influential supporters, this counterculture provides a racial stronghold in which blacks can be as "nasty as they wanna be," a counter-religion to destroy Christianity, and a state-within-the-state that seeks, ultimately, to destroy the state surrounding and supporting it. Too many of Kwanzaa's white supporters have a sentimental attachment to the notion of a Marxist worker's revolution that long outlived their connection either to Marxism or labor. They refuse to face the fact that race, while a potentially revolutionary factor,

is no substitute for working-class action. They prepare for a whirlwind that supposedly will sweep away the garbage of history, leaving clear the road to progress. Instead, this whirlwind will blow away the nation's moral and religious foundations, laying waste to all roads, knocking out all sign posts, and leaving a panicked, confused people to find its way—or to yield to someone claiming to know the way. They likewise refuse to acknowledge that a racial whirlwind already came through not long ago, with horrific results. Note that such a scenario poses much greater risks to blacks than to whites. And as a Jew, I am particularly enraged that so many of Kwanzaa's white apologists are themselves Jews.

Be that as it may, one is not obliged to sit back and watch as things “work themselves out” in the name of “self-determination.” For the “self” being invoked is a violent, irrational changeling that can only breed anarchy, with worse up ahead.

Nicholas Stix writes from New York City.

ECONOMICS

Who Are the Taxers?

by Jeffrey Tucker

Never say Republicans can't learn. After losing the presidency in 1992 on the tax issue, they now use euphemisms for their tax hikes and hide the increases with new and improved fiscal gimmickry. In this Congress, the word “reform” has come to be synonymous with a scheme to extract more money from the private sector, while seeking to avoid paying the electoral price.

This Congress has revived an attack on “loopholes” as evidence of special-interest privilege and a fiscal evil that must be destroyed. The House Ways and Means Committee, Washington's leading hotbed of congressional graft, voted to grab another \$19 billion from the private sector through this sneaky means.

The flat taxers similarly denounce all “loopholes,” and propose to eliminate the charitable deduction and the mort-

gage-interest deduction. Meanwhile, Bill Archer of Texas proposes to close the “loopholes” used by corporate donors to the Democrats (the old tax-and-spend party), but, of course, he invites these corporations to “work with” him on the final bill.

What exactly is a “loophole”? It is an exception to the general rule that income of a certain variety is to be taxed at some level. Let's say, for example, that all furniture manufacturers are taxed at 20 percent, while the makers of roll-top desks are taxed at only five percent. We have here a “loophole” that roll-top desk makers undoubtedly favor and would like to keep. That, presumably, makes them a special interest.

But exactly who are these desk makers hurting by lobbying to retain their special tax break? Only those who would otherwise benefit from stealing their profits. As for the producers, they are merely gaining a legal right to keep an additional quantity of the profits gained from selling consumers goods they want to buy. What, then, would be the point of denouncing these people as a “special interest” that must be stamped out and then raising their taxes up to 20 percent?

Some economists say the loophole should be repealed on grounds that it distorts market decision making. That is, more people go into roll-top desk making than would be the case without the loophole. But looked at from another view, the relatively low tax on roll-tops is less discouraging to potential producers than the higher tax on other furniture. The solution to this alleged distortion, then, is to lower taxes on all furniture instead of plugging a loophole that applies to one. Why not turn the whole industry into a loophole?

This point is inadmissible in conventional political debate. Politicians devoted to “revenue neutrality” have apparently sworn an oath never to allow government revenue to decline. If they catch someone keeping more money than someone else, they always propose to “upwardly harmonize” the tax rates. This is not only economically destructive; it's unjust as well.

Let's say a band of criminals has been raiding your neighborhood, but mysteriously leaving one house untouched. As a result, this house's residents have their property and their peace of mind. It would be absurd to deal with the crime wave by demanding equal damage to all houses, even if the untouched house had

successfully pleaded to be left alone. To crystallize the analogy to tax reform, remember that the ones proposing the rule of equal destruction are the criminals themselves. Destroying more innocent people's property and peace of mind can only satisfy the envious; indeed, envy and greed are the driving forces behind the movement to close loopholes.

Even worse, the Republican leadership would have us believe that by repealing targeted tax allowances, they are attacking “corporate welfare.” But how can this be? Welfare clients live off other people's money taken by force. People using tax breaks are merely trying to keep their own money from becoming government property by force. People using tax breaks are the hosts; bums living off others are the parasites. Using the word “welfare” to describe both can only be a deliberate attempt to disguise the real issue. A loophole rescinded constitutes not welfare repealed but a tax raised.

The first signs that tax policy was getting off track came early in this Congress. Washington think-tanks, socialist and free market, joined forces to denounce “corporate welfare.” Repeal that, they said, before you go after conventional welfare. Of course, the purpose of the makeshift coalition was to enhance the prospects of favorable media attention, which it did. But the liberals' reasons for joining the coalition was to cut industrial subsidies given in the name of defense (good idea) and repeal corporate loopholes (bad idea). Meanwhile, the “free-market” guys had something else in mind. They were calling for a cut in subsidies to the sugar industry, bee keepers, and the like (good ideas) and work toward a flat tax by repealing certain deductions (bad idea), while quietly distancing themselves from what they knew to be the questionable agenda of the liberals (impossible).

The organizers played down these differences, and the results were predictable. Congress tossed aside the good parts of both agendas (there's been no cut in the military or cash subsidies for other industries) and kept the bad parts (repealing tax breaks and deductions wherever possible). The think-tanks have been reluctant to draw attention to this subversion because they are always anxious to take credit for anything Congress passes if it approximates the goal of a pet project. The result—as could have been predicted from the beginning—was that Capitol Hill liber-