

## AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'

March 22, 2004

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I do love the club historian's lectures. I suspect that most of us look forward to them as one of the greatest pleasures of membership. Our guests here need to know that once a year John Diehl, the institutional memory of this association, paints for us scenes from the club's past, with particular attention to the earliest days. Thanks to those excellent papers, I know that the Literary Club of the eighteen fifties and sixties was not a collection of bald men with glasses and grey beards. Not that there's anything wrong with that. But it was different at the beginning. The founding members were fewer, younger, and largely free of tradition. They probably had nothing *against* tradition, but they were too busy goofing off together to be much interested. And traditions take time to evolve. In those days things were looser and, one suspects, rowdier. There were debates, arguments, songs, and cigars, with no tut tuts from the anti-tobacco faction. There was no, in fact, no anti-tobacco faction, making it a kind of heaven. When those early Literarians toppled out the door and down the steps into the mid-Victorian city at the end of a meeting, they were probably a little tipsier than we are, and, consequently a little less well behaved. None of John's histories have reported any duels or even brawls, but I simply do not believe that young men, even middle aged men, who have been drinking and debating on a Saturday night, did not have flare-ups and disagreements leading occasionally to harsh words on the sidewalk. As far as I am concerned, that is the way it should be. If I have a complaint about this club in the present day it is this, we ain't misbehaving. We're just too damned nice. I would like at least twice a year to see fistfights on the sidewalk. Some hot tempered blustering would be nice. And so would some name calling. It would be good for the arteries and good for the brain. It would mean that we are not sticking to safe subjects.

Too much niceness in the Literary Club is not a fatal problem. But too much niceness citywide - That's another matter. It is my opinion, and therefore it is true, that niceness in Cincinnati is getting in the way of progress. The great civic goal here in the queen city of the west seems to be niceness rather than excellence. We are so keen on being nice that we are as reluctant as the Japanese to face our problems, lest facing our problems provoke discomfort. Why? Is it something in the water? In the fluoridated, carbon filtered, municipally managed, county owned, universally distributed Cincinnati waterworks water? It might be. And is niceness so bad? If niceness is a barrier to risk taking, yes. It is so bad.

Orson Welles, a brilliant young man who misbehaved, famously, often, and with real commitment, wrote the following lines into the Graham Greene and Carol Reed screenplay for the movie *The Third Man*.

"In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace. And what did that produce? The cuckoo-clock."

Many of you have been to Switzerland, or have at least passed through on your way to more pleasurable, badly behaved countries, or, if you haven't been there, you have read enough about the obsessively tidy mountain stronghold with its huge body of banks and tiny bodies of art and literature that you get Orson Welles's joke. Substitute Cincinnati for Switzerland and see how long you laugh.

My proposal here tonight is that our own beloved city and its hinterland may be drifting, may even have already drifted into a terminally Swisslike state, a civic coma, if you will. I will be taking advantage of your forced attention here to layout for you enough examples of this urban inertia that you will have to agree with me that there is indeed a problem. We will look for longer than some of you will find acceptable into how we got into this state. We will hear what the future holds for us if we continue to drift as we have been drifting, and we will conclude with some courses of action to fix things and make them right.

If any of you have brought guests with the expectation of a few lighthearted laughs at the expense of some safe targets, I offer a semi-sincere apology. But I find nothing in the bylaws that says one's course in the literary waters must never change, so right full rudder, all ahead full, and as we used to say on the dangerously top heavy USS Waller, standby for heavy rolls.

There is a commonly held belief that it is destructive to call attention publicly to the city's problems. It's not constructive. One shouldn't be negative, one should always be positive. But if a frank discussion of the bats in our belfry and the warts on our noses is destructive, it is so only because people panic in their worry over what outsiders will think. That panic reflects a terrible lack of confidence. And I can not tell you whether the lack of confidence is because things are so bad or that things are so bad because there is a lack of confidence. But I am confident that this is a safe place to talk turkey about our city.

There's not enough happening here. Heavy industry has largely left town. The city that made the tools that made the machines that made modern life modern and agreeable is now the city that goes to the Home Depot and Costco to buy the pots and pans and quilts and computers made by machines built by machines in China. "Ho ho!", you say, "not in my house, for my kitchen is stocked with beautiful pots and pans made by somebody named Claudio Ventafresca or something Tuscan like that." "Ho ho!" I say. Turn the pot over and look at the bottom. It's made not in some spiffy factory in Milan. It's made in China. And what sits on the grounds of the great machine tool works of Oakley and Norwood, hallowed acres where highly skilled workers not too long ago tinkered and invented and created and manufactured? Where the Geiers' great Cincinnati Milling Machine company stood you will find Sam's Club, Target, Meijer's Thrifty Acres, Circuit City, and a Dodge Dealership. The LeBlonde's *Torre Bolognese* towers over a Banana Republic, Bed Bath and Beyond. DSW shoe warehouse. The great tool works have not just moved out. They are gone.

Rookwood Pottery, our own moment of fame on the Antique Roadshow shut down years ago. You can eat a hamburger in a kiln there. The molds and the trademark wound up down in Alabama where they may still be if they have not gone to China.

There is no entertainment industry. The city where Powel Crosley and Ruth Lyons invented all kinds of original programming now originates nothing. The call letters you listen to with half an ear since they broadcast nothing of real interest to anyone are owned by enormous chains of stations located elsewhere, and, with few exceptions, the voices you here probably come from someplace we used to joke about like Indianapolis.

The gizmos and gadgets that have completely changed business and office life, things like personal computers, routers, servers, multifunction copiers, laser printers, and wireless modems are not just not made here, but were never made here. Were never even close to being made here. And "pooh," you say. "Tech stocks are in the toilet, and all that Silicon Valley nonsense about being the real economic engine of the country or the world or the universe or whatever it was they were saying in the nineties turned out to be a bubble just like the tulips." Well, not exactly. Tech stocks have been climbing up out of the toilet for the past couple of years, and, except for the most retrograde and wasteful law offices, secretaries are no more to be found. Everyone from chief executive officer to bitterest, hardest-bitten bookkeeper sits down to think, write, account, invent, research, and keep stock of inventory at a wee computer. Among the few working people who don't have to know how to power up a power book are politicians, people for whom the idea of efficiency does not, well, compute.

Not only did we not invent the hardware and continue not to make it, but we didn't write the software here either. With few exceptions, the people who spend the tons and tons of money they make writing the instructions that make all those little powerbooks and imacs dance their little dances spend it on coffee and castles elsewhere because they are elsewhere. They are not here. They may have been born here, and they may have gone to school here, but they aren't here. They go where the money is and where there are other people doing their kind of work. It's not here.

The stockyards that made the city so rich and the piggies that came to town to be flensed and rendered into candles and soap now, with few exceptions, trot elsewhere to be sacrificed. If you haven't driven the length of Spring Grove Avenue recently, you should. Tap on the window and tell your driver to start you down at the strangely quiet scrap metal yards by the river, and follow the Mill Creek valley up to the headwaters. It's not what you remember. The trucks and traffic and streetcars that once made passage such an ordeal are gone. You can whiz up Dalton Street, passing warehouses that make nothing, zoom under the train station where one forlorn train shuttles lamely through at three in the morning, and pass shuttered factory after shuttered factory. William Procter's fabulous Ivorydale is still there, but it's passed into other hands, and most of the great workforce has moved on. The Formica factory buildings now warehouse unfriendly chemicals hiding out from the EP A. The Mill Creek Valley is a graveyard with a sewer running through it.

There is no art movement here. There is plenty of art. There is plenty of money being spent on art and on art buildings and there is art instruction. But since Frank Duveneck went to his reward, there has been no Cincinnati school of painting. Every day when I go to work I am surrounded by portraits in plaster and stone of notables from the nineteenth century. The majority of the works are by artists who worked here in Cincinnati thanks to the interest and financial backing of Nicholas Longworth. Included among the portraits is one of Nicholas Longworth by Hiram Powers, one of the greatest

of Longworth's protégés. There was an art movement here for a while, thanks to Nicholas Longworth. It moved away years ago.

Suppose you want to see original theatre. There are people who do like plays and do think there must be a future for theatre. But where in Cincinnati would you take a guest who wanted to see what your indigenous fledgling playwrights were up to? Where would you take someone who wanted to see a play mounted by a company of actors creating productions from scripts that were written here, about people who live here? Regularly and routinely?

While you're thinking about that, multitask a little bit and think about Elizabethan London, a city much smaller than our own metropolis, but a city that was home to Ben Jonson, John Webster, Christopher Marlowe, and whoever it was that was writing under the name Shakespeare. You would not have found fluoridated water, mulberry tinted sidewalk pavers, a recreation commission, or a peace education center in that small, chaotic city. If you walked in the side streets you stood a good chance of getting hit by the contents of a slop pot poured from an upper story. In the absence of the Royal Association For the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals it was possible to pay a few pence to watch dogs attempting to bite the throats out of bears. But you also got such fabulous theatre that four hundred years later plane loads of Cincinnatians spend thousand of dollars to leave our big clean airport to fly to England to see those same Elizabethan dramas which, except for the dark days of the Puritans, have never been out of production.

Let's look at another city. A city that was by far the dominant force politically and economically in its region. A city of opportunity. A city full of immigrants who had come specifically for that economic and political freedom. A city that had built the leading public library of its day. A publishing center. A printing center. A city with more than a dozen newspapers, some of them published daily in languages other than English. A center of trade. A home to countless organizations for the betterment of mind, body, and pocketbook. A city whose center street was lined with taverns and restaurants. A city so rich that a dozen young men could organize a club for their intellectual amusement and watch that same club become the intellectual center of the city in just a few years. A city that saw no limits to its possibilities. That was Cincinnati just a hundred years ago.

What's the deal? Were people smarter then? Was there something in the precarbon filter water? Was the gene pool, which was, I assure you, much smaller than our own, fresher? Why is there no Florentine art movement in this big rich city we call home? Why is it not a great center of opportunity.

People flocked to sixteenth century London, with its open sewers, footpads, murderers, whores, and bull baiting. They flocked to Cincinnati with its Bloody Run and its brutalized Mill Creek, its population packed more densely than any in North America. They are not flocking to Cincinnati today.

People are not flocking to Cincinnati and, more disturbing, far too many of the people who live here are on their way out or would like to leave.

"Pooh," you say again. "Who are these people who want to leave? Are they anyone you actually know?" Probably not. The people you know probably love living here. You love living here. I love living here. If your day takes you from Walsh Road or Herschel Avenue or Ambleside Place or Lafayette Avenue or Interwood to Fourth Street you are a happy man. You pass along some of the pleasantest thoroughfares ever paved. As members of this association you spend one night out of seven in the best company it is possible to keep, and you go to bed with liverwurst and Pilsner Urquell coursing through your veins, and there can be no better state. But we are a tiny group, really. And rather more retired than average. So are our neighbors. We're enjoying the fruits of our labor rather than busily planting new orchards

"Oh, dear," the alert news readers among you should be muttering about now. "Here comes that silly Florida report and the nonsense about the Creative Class." Well, yes and no.

Richard Florida is a Carnegie Mellon professor whose fifteen minutes of fame have come about from his theorizing that the American cities that are doing well are the cities that have attracted and kept the young people who invent and paint and write and compose and create software and wear the blackest possible clothes and the oddest color hair and screw metal objects into their eyebrows and frequently orient themselves to others of their same sex. One knows right away that there are deep flaws in Professor Florida's theory because every clueless and suspect body from Cincinnati City Council to the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce to the World's Worst Newspaper has latched onto it with a death grip and begun floundering around looking for ways to get cool so that cool people will show up and save us all.

But. Just because those woozy organizations, institutions that are always always a day late and a dollar short, are in the hunt for the creative class and just because Professor Florida's theory was dreamed up when the tech bubble was still afloat and San Francisco and Austin, Texas were the co-capitals of the known hip universe does not mean that there is no meat there. The truth is that Cincinnati, like so many other cities its size and age, is busy educating its young people and its young people, the ones who have are ambitious and keen to be in on the latest whatever are taking their educations and beating it out of town, heading for what they hope and believe will be hipper spots.

"Good riddance," you say. "Nothing more tiresome than fresh college graduates." And I agree. They are tiresome. But they are the future. And if they continue to think that the city that gave them birth has no future for them, or at least no future that fits their exalted self-image, then they will continue to troop to Seattle and the city will continue to lose an important part of its wealth.

A note about the city's public image. A young man I have known since his birth thirty four years ago, a graduate of Saint Xavier high school, an Ohio State civil engineer with a Masters in Business Administration from an eastern university, tells me that he is humiliated by the persistent reaction of the people he meets in Connecticut, where he works, to his home city. Those casual observers think of Cincinnati not as the home of Paavo Jarvi, not as the home of the college of Design Art Architecture and Planning, nor the college of medicine and its surrounding hospitals, not the queen city of the west, but

as the home of an unusually crude baseball player, an inept football family, public porno prosecutions, and big, bad racial problems.

Consider the racial problems. Not just the media hyped riot of 2001, but the long term, deep seated dislike of Cincinnati's large African American population for their home town and their place in it. And dislike may be too weak a word. They want out as badly as any would be hipster. I do not include the ambitious, hardworking employees of the companies that have taken steps to see that their work force resembles in its complexity the market to which the cleaners and fresheners that are the fruits of their labors will be sold. The ever strengthening Black middle class is largely indistinguishable from the white middle class in its dreams and desires, but that middle class is also largely in West Chester, Warren County, and the sprawling new suburbs that have turned their back on the city.

The residents of Evanston, Avondale, Millvale, English Woods, Winton Terrace, and, increasingly, Price Hill and Westwood see a different city. And they don't like it. One of the biggest reasons they don't like it is that they are dead sure that the City, a large vague entity, doesn't like them and wishes they would go away. Their understanding of the city is a product of isolation from school to church to street corner. It is reinforced by talk radio and it is reinforced by the city's impotence in the face of criminal behaviour that bedevils black neighborhoods far more than white.

"Enough," you say. "These problems are not of our doing. And conditions are no different in other old industrial cities." My, my, I say. You are starting to sound like a bureaucrat.

However much you can blame our fate on conditions over which we have no control, conditions that have hammered St. Louis, Buffalo, Milwaukee, Memphis, and others of our age and general history, we have to face the fact that some of our problems are peculiar to Cincinnati and, worse, are self inflicted.

Take our sheriff. Please. For the past several decades, we have allowed the parameters of our community standards of decency in art, culture, and commerce to be set by not by well educated men and women, not by people who have learned to look at things from more than one or two points of view, but by a man whose mean view of the world is no more representative of what we here under this roof would accept than that of Savonarola, Father Coughlin, Oliver Cromwell, or the Citizens for Civil Decency, the sheriff's partner in the fight to keep sex in the bedroom with the light off and the clothes on. Our present sheriff is a bully. A self righteous bully. A man who brought with him from his parochial upbringing and the Marine Corps a view of the world completely untempered by the balance and tolerance we who have served in the armed forces know to be the mark of a good officer or NCO. His non-community standard has roots that lead all the way back to the League for Civil Decency, the weapon with which Charles Keating used to lay about before he got interested in finance.

He is the sheriff because we have accepted him. We apparently think streets free of porno theaters and newsstands free of Larry Flynt publications are worth the occasional national embarrassment occasioned by the sheriff's actions against what passes for art these days. The art we miss is probably no loss, and porno is two clicks of a mouse away on the internet. But the national embarrassment costs us. It goes into Google

under Cincinnati, where it can be retrieved in a nanosecond by comedy writer looking for a cheap laugh at the city's expense. The sheriff's blunderings are right there in the cyber file with poor Mrs. Schott, rich Mike Brown, ridiculous Pete Rose, and that dopey fight we had over the flying pigs in Bicentennial Commons, all regularly recurring gags on the late night chat shows and, more damaging, John Stewart's Daily Show. Like J. Edgar Hoover, our sheriff has created a name for himself fighting enemies of his choosing rather than the enemies we would choose. He is famous not for cleaning up drug rings, not for eliminating traffic dangers, not for solving murders. He is nationally famous for fighting Larry Flynt. So we are famous for fighting Larry Flynt.

We seem to elect and re elect the sheriff because we think he is keeping criminals from the streets, but our criminals continue to shoot each other out in the suburbs just as regularly as they do over the Rhine. It is we who ain't misbehavin' so we won't get locked up for watching dirty movies while slumlords and drug dealers thumb their nose at us and call us chumps.

Here's another place where we have chosen to accept the unacceptable rather than make waves. Our morning newspaper. Our morning newspaper will, in a few years, be our only newspaper. Three years from now, when the joint operating agreement with the afternoon newspaper ends, we know that the morning newspaper will be the only daily newspaper. The morning newspaper has for years been the larger of the two dailies in circulation. It is a disgrace.

There are cities where the daily newspaper, even with no competition, is part of the system of checks and balances of power, cities where the newspaper is contentious, nosy, vocal, and involved. In those cities, people in power know they are being watched as they go about their business and they behave or misbehave accordingly. That is not the case in Cincinnati. Our morning newspaper is owned by a corporation. Nothing wrong with that, unless the corporation has no journalistic vanity, and it is clear that the Gannett Corporation has none. Without journalistic vanity there is no pressure to stay on top of stories, to root through records, to talk to people in the street, to find out what's happening. When the only corporate vanity is in the strength of the balance sheet, the pressure on the publisher is not to run a great paper, but to contribute to the bottom line. Bottom lines are great. Profit is great. Profit is necessary. But, when a publisher's marching orders are not to sell newspapers by being a great newspaper but to sell newspapers by being the best friend of a hypothetical minivan driving homemaker in Mason, compiling articles on how to find the best value in carpets, the newspaper will inevitably sink to the level of television.

Does this bother you? It should. But it doesn't bother you enough to misbehave. None of you that I know of has ever thrown a dead cat in the lobby of the morning newspaper to let the editor know how bad it stinks. Now that would be some fine, constructive misbehaving. Our solution, though, as evidenced by the hundreds of blue wrappers that lie on the doorsteps of your neighborhood, is to take the morning newspaper of a city five hundred miles away.

Our most grievous self-inflicted wound is our city government. Eighty years ago, in a fit of good behaviour, we eliminated a conventional city government of aldermen and political bosses. The old government was corrupt, ripe with paybacks and ripoffs,

cronyism and back-scratching. The monument to the old mess is still with us. It is the never completed subway that runs along the old canal route under Central Parkway. Costing something like the gross national product of Peru, the subway has housed nothing more than a water main and some A-bomb shelters for the past eighty years, and it took most of that time to pay off the bonds. To good government types, the subway served as a stem warning of the dangers of the old ways. Many people tie it to poor old boss Cox, confusing their decades but securing their sense of virtue.

For long years, the good government types, and let us call them by their catchy nick name, googoos - the googoos preened in their belief that Cincinnati was the best governed city in the universe. I do not dispute that the first years of the city manager system were indeed a period of clean living and thrift. But those days are long vanished. I know first hand. It was my enlightening fate to find myself working for what was still billing itself as the best governed city in the universe in the nineteen seventies. What I found was a system as sclerotic, inflexible, and poorly managed as the old Soviet Union. The supposedly incorruptible civil service had been corrupted. Not by money, mind you. But by mediocrity. The system of scientific job descriptions and examinations had become as unreflective of modern needs as its Chinese counterpart under the Manchus. The unholy alliance of the system with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, a union not foreseen by Murray Seasongood or his young turks, had made it impossible to fire anyone who was not caught in the act of axe murder, and even the axe murderers were able to appeal the firings. Which were usually overturned. City hall was overstaffed and dumb. And, gentlemen, it has only gotten worse. A succession of city managers, drawn not from business, but from trade schools, has cemented the mediocrity but good.

The great reforms did something else bad for the sake of good behaviour. They undid the connection between electors and government. They broke the back of party machinery. The idea was to have a government that would repair the streets where they needed to be repaired rather than in the district of a favored politician. The system worked correctly only until the people fixing the streets realized that the city manager system in harness with the civil service system and the union provided excellent insulation from pressure of any kind. In the bad old system, you could call the ward boss for whom you had turned out the vote and scream about the junked automobile in the alley, the ward boss would call the nephew he had placed in public works, and the junker would go. There was accountability. Now there is none.

You may be unaware of the problem of abandoned automobiles, but that may have something to do with your zip code.

In the bad old system, the ward boss knew your neighborhood. In our present system of good government the collection of nitwits and grandstanders who are supposed to be setting policy while the city manager runs the machinery are nearly all from the same two zip codes. Again, that's good for you if you live in 45229 or 45208, but it's maddening for the rest of us.

In the bad old system an unelected official ran the city from Wielert's beer garden. In our present good government the mayor is out on the golf course, the city manager is



in Europe, the inmates on Plum Street are doing nothing to run the city, and there Wielert's sits empty while drug deals go down in the alley behind.

In the bad old system, a young politician could get a start running for office in his neighborhood using a little shoe leather and not too much money. In our present good government it is necessary for election to one of the nine at-large seats to raise a campaign chest many times bigger than a councilman's salary in order to run political advertising on television that will reach an entire city.

The worst damage inflicted by good government is a scab we're picking right now. Cities are supposed to be the great engines of assimilation. One of the most important components of that engine was street level politics. As each wave of immigration reached the American shore, there was a mechanism to reach and teach the new arrivals, providing connections and know how, and most importantly, jobs. The currency in those exchanges was votes. Does that just make you cringe? It's misbehaviour of the worst sort, right? I don't think so. That machinery accommodated Germans, Italians, Slovenes, Slovaks, Irish, and Polish immigrants in big cities all over the country. The children and grandchildren of those immigrants run the country now. It worked.

In Cincinnati, however, good government failed at one of the most important moments in our history. When, with the mobilization for the second world war and with the mechanization of agriculture in the cotton-growing south, the greatest internal migration in our history began to bring wave after wave of the descendants of slaves to Cincinnati looking for jobs, a migration that was bigger than any other ever seen here, the political machinery that should have helped in myriad important ways with the accommodation of those citizens to their new home had been dismantled. Instead of a helpful ward heeler holding out opportunities and services in exchange for votes from those new arrivals, men and women who needed everything, those new arrivals found a hermetically sealed municipal apparatus ticking away, impervious to corruption, and utterly inhuman. In Chicago, every gook's favorite nightmare, the southern migrants found within a few short years, that their vote was worth something. In Cincinnati, the southern migrants found that their votes elected a policy board. A policy board. Instead of usefully corruptible aldermen those new citizens found a city manager appointed not for his sensitivity to the shifting political tide but for his ability to run mechanical systems.

The new arrivals found city government to be distant, disinterested, and deaf. The best governed city in America was government of other people, for other people, and by other people, and they did not cherish it. Their children and grandchildren do not cherish it. They demonize it. And, since it is seen in no way to be theirs, they feel free to trash it.

"But wait," you surviving Charterites say. "That's not how it's supposed to be. We just need to run charter government the way it was designed to be run, and then it will be wonderful." That is exactly what the apologists for communism, most of whom have tenure in publicly funded humanities departments, continue to say about communism. We just didn't give it a chance. We have given it a chance. It doesn't work. It's time for the dustbin.

I said earlier that we would take a look at the future. Let's do that.

What is likely to happen is that we will go on as we have been doing. Black residents of the city will continue to be isolated and irritated. White residents of the city will continue to feel that they are being given an unfair shake by black people. As young west side families move to new subdivisions in new parishes ever more westerly, and the old westsiders move into assisted living and condominium developments, the old white Westside ghettos will wake up to find themselves then new Westside black ghettos, and the new residents will wonder why they wanted to move there. The morning paper will continue to chase after a demographic that has grown up ignoring newspapers. The afternoon paper will cease to exist. The television stations will continue to present fake hard news and lots of cheery byplay amongst the anchorpersons. Large retail establishments will continue to eat enormous amounts of space everywhere but in the central city in order to sell goods made elsewhere. The university will continue to churn out chipper young engineers and business people who will pack up and leave for places with cooler reputations and more job openings. Our cultural institutions will continue to search frantically for ways to relate to young people who are too busy packing to leave to be available for cultural relationships. The mayor will continue to golf and the city manager will continue to travel. The inmates on city council will fight to keep the system the way it is since that is the system that got them a salary, notoriety, a parking place, and devoted assistants. City Hall will continue to be a refuge for second rate employees. Public works will continue blindly to install brick sidewalks in front of vacant storefronts, since that seems to be how the best governed city in the universe believes businesses are attracted. Vagrants and winos will continue to urinate on the sidewalks surrounding Washington Park as kindly church people from the suburbs continue to flock to skid row to join the public urination enablers in their fight against those who would clean up a public embarrassment. The children who attend Washington Park School and the new School for the Creative and Performing Arts will smell the odor of corruption on the surrounding sidewalks.

There will continue to be task forces to address the general malaise. Politicians will continue to ask business people to do what politicians are elected to do, which is to say to address large problems of public concern. Business people will continue to apply business methods to public problems and the electorate will be unhappy.

The gaping holes in the central riverfront will continue to gape as it slowly sinks in on the public consciousness that the plan developed for the front porch by a task force of business people would create a new business district full of vacant storefronts when we already have a business district full of vacant storefronts.

City traffic engineers will continue to develop fast efficient ways for people to leave town in their automobiles.

I think that's a crummy future. I think you should agree with me. I think you should do something about it. I think we should all do something about it. I think that we should be ambitious for our city. I think that we should assume we have in our standard metropolitan statistical area of a couple of million healthy people at least as many people of talent as the much smaller renaissance cities of London and Florence and our own city in its younger days, and that those people should be happy to be here. They should look down their noses at people from upstart cities because it's better here. But we've got to

change attitudes. And we've got to stop letting our agenda be set by people who can't find their glutei with both hands.

Here are some courses of action.

First, there are some simple solutions to stem the exodus of the groovy young. The simplest is bribery. If you have a clever grandson or niece, daughter in law or stepchild, and you think the city would be worse off without him or her, write a check. A big one. Tell him it's his if he'll stay here a year starting a business. Buy him a house. Find her a job. Knit that member of the creative class into the fabric so tightly that it will be financially and or professionally ruinous for her to leave. Write him into the will. Tell her that she will inherit that cabin on Lake Huron only if she promises to stay in Cincinnati and be clever.

And never hesitate to use emotional blackmail. If it means riding around in a wheel chair moaning piteously, do it. The old ways are best.

About the morning newspaper. How can we possibly reform a paper that is owned by a corporation located elsewhere, itself owned by stockholders throughout the country? How do we change a company policy that promotes from within, assuring that it will never be better than the other undistinguished papers in the chain? It doesn't do any good to cancel your subscription. And it doesn't do any good to write a huffy letter to the editor. But I have this feeling that shame and embarrassment might do the trick. I propose not a boycott of the paper, but picketing. Boycotts seldom work. But picket lines occasionally do. If, every Monday, before or after the meeting of this body, some twenty distinguished, venerable, tweed clad, greybeards marched from Lytle Park to the corner of Third and Elm, where the paper hides out, to wave signs and bang pots and pans on the sidewalk like the famously brave Argentine mothers did in Buenos Aires, it would be newsworthy. It would not show up in the morning paper here in town, but it would attract television reporters. If the protest went on for more than a year, it would eventually come to the attention of the New York Times which would run embarrassing photographs. Indeed, a long running protest starring men in suits and ties would be very likely to show up in gags on the evening talk shows, only this time sympathetically. And, to make the protest portable, never appear in public without City Beat and the Herald displayed prominently under your arm.

What can we do about the sheriff? It is unlikely that he will lose an election for years to come. He will never be caught with a dead woman or a live boy. He is in very good health. But it ought to be possible to make him as publicly ridiculous as we may privately find him. Here is where a course of misbehaving is in order. Since the broken windows theory of policing has failed to find any takers in Cincinnati (and if you don't know what that's about, see me on the steps after the fight) we can feel free to break some windows of our own. If you are a minister, you should be able to conduct far many more gay weddings than the authorities have time to shut down. If you are the father of a gay son, offer to pay for a large gay wedding. Insist on hiring off duty deputies for crowd control.

You can also take active steps to confound the spectacularly wasted efforts to wipe out the supposed scourge of marijuana. If the constabulary were no longer spending time to bust teenaged entrepreneurs for marijuana related offenses, we would not only be

able to slow down the construction of new jails, but there would be time to go after those dealing in truly dangerous drugs. Cannabis is a common American - well - weed. Let it thrive. If you own arable ground, even if it is no more than a window box, plant cannabis. You don't have to smoke it. Just plant it. If you don't know where to get cannabis seeds, ask your grandchildren. Strew seeds everywhere.

If you are too exhausted to do any of the above, try a little oral subversion. Whenever you are dining in a public place, bring the conversation around to the subject of the sheriff so that you can say in your loudest, most irritated voice, "The sheriff is an embarrassment to the city. He should have retired twenty years ago." Your wife will tell you to hush, but the message will have gone out. Eventually it will sink in.

Probably most important, there is a movement afoot to deep six Cincinnati's at-large council and create districts from which council members will have to run. This is good idea. Restoring districts is as good an idea as the elimination of large housing projects and the restoration of streets and alleys. It is as good an idea as the restoration of the Mill Creek, the elimination of middle schools, and the encouragement of native vegetation. District representation, when coupled with a mayor who uses his or her powers to run the city like a real mayor, without a city manager, has the potential to restore healthy normal politics to a city badly in need of that. But district elections are opposed both by googoes and incumbent politicians. You need to find out who is backing district elections so you can write big fat checks to help them get the word out. If you are a goo goo, you need to get over it. Good government has gotten us where we are today, a city with which no self respecting suburb would ever consider merging. We need some old fashioned bad government with swagger and pride, and we need it quick. We need a system that will bring up young politicians who have to live in the districts they represent. And we need those young politicians to face down the public employee unions to return the residency requirement to city employment. Dear god, if you don't like the city well enough to live here, then you really ought not to be taking the tax dollars of those who do.

I for one plan to end every public oration as Cato the Censor did when he added *Carthagine delenda est* to every stemwinder, only I will speak in plain, pithy, bumper sticker friendly English.

Good government has got to go.

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