

Aren't we a pair?

# Vote In The Clowns

by Alfred Adask

Economist Milton Friedman recently warned us to, "keep an eye on the internet since it's making it harder and harder for government to collect taxes."

If Friedman's right, how can traditional government survive without taxes? Voluntary contributions?

More importantly, how can government intimidate the serfs without the threat of an aggressive IRS?

Amazingly, government is, so far, yielding to the technological forces of decentralization. The House recently passed a law that banned taxes on the internet for *five years*. The Senate is expected to follow. If they can't tax the internet for five years, by 2005 the internet will be so big, so deeply rooted in the world's economy, it may be almost impossible to impose new taxes at that time.

Faced with this technological challenge, what did Bill Clinton do? In early May, he made his first comedy video featuring him peddling his bike around in the halls of the White House and pounding on a candy dispenser to get free Snickers bars. His video was so funny, I gotta admit, I'm gonna miss this clown.

As comedian Drew Carey recently remarked, "Clinton's a sociopath" – Yes, but he's a *funny* sociopath. Sure, he's been caught or implicated in drug use, drug dealing, murder, treason, infidelity, hypocrisy, and looking us straight in the eye and telling shameless lies.

But on the other hand, Jay Leno has rightly praised Clinton for providing us with a "golden age" of latenight comedy. But now Leno laments, "What'll we do for laughs when Clinton's gone?" Indeed.

When you get right down to it, no matter how demonic Clinton might seem, who has he really hurt besides those who were dumb enough to get close to him? His wife. Ron Brown. Vince Foster. Web Hubble. Al Gore. The Democrat party. Historians have voted his White House staff the prestigious "Most Likely To Do Time" award . . . .

What's Clinton really achieved in the last eight years besides keeping us amused? He pushed for health care, and it blew up in his face. He pushed for gun control, and precipitated more gun sales to more Americans than ever before.

He's discredited the Presi-

dency so badly, that Hollywood has been called on to restore public confidence with a weekly "virtual White House" TV program called "West Wing". Now the peepul can sleep soundly knowing the country's in the capable hands of actor Martin Sheen.

And why does "West Wing" deliver a better presidential image than Clinton? Well, lookit the money. Remember Donald Trump's question: "Do you really want to elect someone to the Presidency who's never earned over \$200,000?" The "West Wing's" *extras* are paid more than Clinton – so, of course, they deliver a more believable political illusion. Whadaya want in the (real) White House for \$250,000 a year? Tom Cruise?

Whether Clinton is more dummy than demon is debatable, but it matter less each year as the powers of his office diminish.

## Vote for the class clown

Over half of Americans eligible to vote don't bother. Government bemoans voter apathy, but maybe the nonvoters have a point. Maybe they sense that it's not the *voting* that's become irrelevant – it's the *politicians*.

Sure, your vote still counts; it's the *politicians* that don't matter.

Half the country believes that electing either the spoiled son of a former Senator or the spoiled son of a former President will make a measurable difference in how this country prospers.

Maybe so.

But the other *half* – the growing half – of America disagrees. They doubt that electing Bush or Gore will really make much difference. Why? Because in the decentralized internet world, the office of President is increasingly irrelevant. I think they're right.

### Decisions, decisions!

So who should we vote for this November? Well, if the candidates are largely irrelevant in a substantive sense, which one is most likely to keep Leno, Letterman and the rest of us giggling?

Not Bush. The comedians have already worn out the jokes about G.W.'s intellect and education. And he's too smart to rise to the bait on the drug use questions. His wife seems pretty normal and his kids are OK, so where's the scandal potential? Where's the laughs?

But Gore – the man who publicly claimed to have invented the internet, discovered the Love Canal, and inspired the book "Love Story" – is not merely a liar, he's a fool.

Bill Clinton can look us in the eye, wave his finger, and declare

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"I have *not* had sexual relations with that woman!" And we believed him. Bill's a consummate liar. He's a pro. America respects that in her politicians.

But Gore? He's an incompetent liar. You just know this guy will tell some whoppers if he gets in the White House. Gore's the kind of compulsive liar who (in a weak moment) just might claim to have been the first man to set foot on the moon. Think of the jokes! Think of the delicious contempt he'll inspire!

Don't misunderstand. I'm not saying Gore can be as big a buffoon as Clinton, but the kid's got potential. Just imagine stuffy Al Gore in the White House, manfully pulling the levers of power – and not realizing that in our decentralized world, the levers are no longer connected! That's more than comedy, that's pathos, that's classic . . . that's . . . enter-taaaain-ment!

And don't forget – if we elect Gore, we'll probably get Hilary

(the First Lady Lesbian), too! And if Hilary's back in Washington, Bill won't be far behind. Think about it. The same cast, the same plot . . . it'll be like a sequel to a hit movie. Instead of "Bill and Al's Bodacious Adventure!" we'll have "Al and Bill's Bodacious Adventure!" Or maybe we'll freshen up the title and call it "Bozo's on the Potomac," or maybe "The Three Stooges Do Government," or maybe . . . ahh, we'll think of something.

But whatever we call the next administration, electing incompetents and fools to the White House is no longer as dangerous as it once was. In the decentralized world of electronic communication, the centralized power of all public officials is diminishing and the character of the office holder is increasingly irrelevant.

Of course, I'm exaggerating to make a point. The government and office of President still wield massive, potentially lethal power. In truth, it does matter who we elect. But as centralized power wanes, so does the importance of public office and office-holders.

As the internet endows individuals with unprecedented power, it "individualizes" and decentralizes all power. As a result, traditional (centralized power) organizations and governments are becoming increasingly impaired, irrelevant and almost obsolete. ■

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