

strict military discipline on himself, should be indicted for such an offense.

During his long lifetime, Holmes worked hard, read widely, knew many of the great personages of the day, and, especially in his letters,

grappled with the big subjects—history, philosophy, literature, life, and death. After all the shot and shell, this intriguing figure remains standing.

—JACOB A. STEIN

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

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### WASHINGTON.

By Meg Greenfield. PublicAffairs.  
272 pp. \$26

Meg Greenfield richly enjoyed stories about the peculiar characters whose talents and ambitions (or hungers) led them to assume roles on the national political scene. When she began her career as a Washington reporter, the vast majority of such persons were those elected to public office by their less driven fellows in the rest of the country. Another sizable number were staffers, bit players empowered and obligated by their politician bosses. Later on, masses of journalists joined the scene, either in print or on the tube. By the time she became editorial page editor of the dominant paper in the capital, the Washington stage was crammed with politically interested men and women, talking and writing up a storm, measuring and rating as they schmoozed, using others at least as often, and as effectively, as they themselves got used.

Greenfield's memoir, published two years after her death, depicts this political tableau in rather muted colors. It is not a Daumier or a Nast, in which political actors fairly leap off the canvas or page. It is more like a carefully composed setting by the American painter William Merritt Chase. There are beautiful disclosures in Chase's paintings; he knew the environment inhabited by late-19th-century gentlefolk, and rendered it well. Yet few of his works had the pulse and heat of common life. In the same way, Greenfield's elaborate, witty observations have the feel of occurring to her not on the street, or even in the newsroom, but in the quiet of the editorial office.

There are, to be sure, amusing snapshots of the political animal. "I haven't done anything scientific to corroborate this," she writes, "but it does seem to me that an awful lot of our national political leaders established their reputations for

special moral worthiness and a sense of responsibility beyond their years precisely against the backdrop of that entirely different sibling who slept in the next bed—the defiant player-around, breaker of rules, and flunker-out, who, though often the more charming of the two, was always either in trouble or just about to be. Let your mind range over the astonishing number of exhibitionists, rogues, and ne'er-do-wells who have turned up in the exalted role of First Brother, for instance—people like Sam Houston Johnson, Donald Nixon, Billy Carter, and Roger Clinton. Right along with their willingness to exploit their presidential brother's status, many have betrayed a smirking disdain for Mr. Goody Two-Shoes and a self-centered indifference to whether or not they caused him embarrassment with their kited checks and turbulent nights spent drying out in the local jail."

Whether Bill Clinton was ever precisely a Mr. Goody Two-Shoes can be argued, but the passage has a wonderful plausibility, and it embodies many of the concerns Greenfield wrote about for nearly 40 years: the moral character and personality of politicians; the attractions of charming rascals, and the need to deal with, to manage, both their charm and their rascality; the sense that arguments over policy, and even over such things as conviction and ultimate purpose, were often less significant to those involved in them than were things like loyalty and rooted connections. She writes with affecting sympathy about Bob Haldeman, whom her *Washington Post* regularly skewered in its pages, and his son Peter, as they struggled to maintain the bonds between them in a time of awful stress. In the din of Watergate denunciations and high-minded preachments, many of them issuing from the *Post*, Greenfield heard the whisper of the vulnerable.

There should be more such stories in *Washington*. The painter's strokes should have

been bolder, more vivid. Or, to change the metaphor, her clever insights and musings should have found their way into a novel—in the manner, say, of a modern Trollope. Perhaps in that novel there might have been more room to say what these Washington characters, at least the elected ones among them, were trying to accomplish, and in what ways they remained involved with citizens outside the Beltway. Throughout her long career, Greenfield cared much about such things, and her last work would have been richer for her reflections on them.

—HARRY MCPHERSON

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***THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM:  
Why a Worldwide Worker Surplus  
and Uncontrolled Free Trade  
Are Sinking American Living Standards.***  
By Alan Tonelson. Westview. 225 pp. \$25

In the 1990s, the Washington consensus held that free trade and deregulated markets would best promote prosperity in countries at all stages of development. This “neoliberal” consensus was shared not only by conservatives and libertarians but by center-left advocates of the Third Way, such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who sought to reconcile progressive redistribution programs with free-market economics. Tonelson, a research fellow at the U.S. Business and Industry Council, provides a well-informed and often witty assault on the conventional wisdom.

He argues that economic globalization, by enlarging the pool of low-wage labor, tends to reduce wages in advanced countries—a point now acknowledged by some free-trade supporters, such as Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati. Tonelson writes that the trade-induced “movement of U.S. workers from high-wage industries to low-wage industries has hit U.S. wage levels with a double whammy. It has lowered wages by greatly reducing the number of Americans working in high-paying jobs [in the manufacturing sector]. In addition, it has just as greatly increased the number of Americans competing for jobs in the lower-paying service sector.” To make matters worse, immigration has depressed service-sector wages further. California, he observes, “was importing people while exporting their likeliest jobs.”

This is dangerous, Tonelson argues, because “alone among the industrialized first world countries, the United States has a large population with what might be called Third World levels of education and skills. Other countries can in theory let labor-intensive industries like apparel or traditional manufacturing industries like textiles and steel migrate abroad without undue social fallout. . . . The United States, however, has more to worry about.”

In addition to questioning the conventional wisdom about how free trade and mass immigration affect ordinary Americans, Tonelson argues that other countries do a better job of promoting the interests of their companies and their workers. For example, China, South Korea, and many other developing nations require U.S. multinationals “to transfer technology, to provide investment capital for other parts of the buyer’s economy, or to purchase goods completely unrelated to the original transaction.” Such governments strategically shape the pattern of global trade and investment, contrary to the oft-heard claim that the global economy is shaped by market forces before which governments stand powerless.

Tonelson’s alternative to the free-market consensus is a robust American economic nationalism. Such a policy might hurt some developing countries hoping to export to the U.S. market, he acknowledges, but “when trade policy is the chosen tool of U.S. economic development policy, our nation’s most economically vulnerable citizens bear the brunt of the costs.”

Some of Tonelson’s arguments can be questioned. For example, he does not consider the possibility that automation, by shifting workers from high-wage factory jobs to low-wage service jobs, would have the same effects as the expatriation of industry to low-wage countries. And his critique of the neoliberal economic consensus is unlikely to change the views of those who identify free trade with intellectual clarity and moral virtue.

But with the failure of free-market “shock therapy” in Russia and Eastern Europe, the Asian financial crisis, and the collapse of the high-tech stock bubble, free trade has hardly inaugurated the golden age of global prosperity that neoliberals promised. Whether