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Book Review: The Fifth Risk

Worse than you can imagine

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THE REAL DEAL

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PRESS

OP-ED

Prescription for Corruptland

By Peter Corrigan
GUEST COLUMNIST



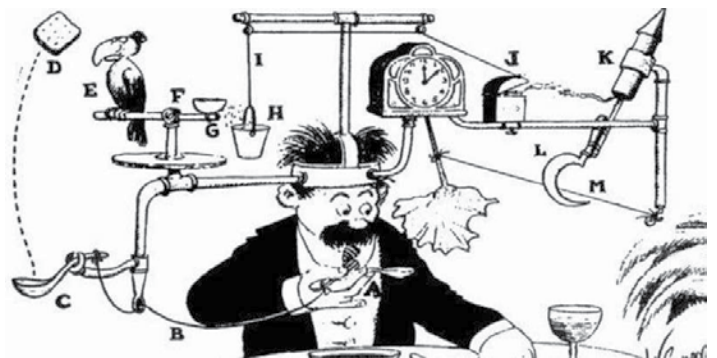
Just this month, Cleveland was acknowledged by the University of Chicago Illinois as one of the 10 most corrupt cities in the United States. The Cheat Sheet ranks us at fourteen. Further, if you go by federal corruption convictions since 2000, Cleveland is ranked in the top ten. There are other rankings as well. I am personally a little skeptical of the objectivity of such lists, but suffice it to say that if there were a championship series in this category, we'd definitely make the playoffs.

Much of the latest wave of alleged corruption has centered on the activities of Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish. I ran my campaign for County Executive to combat corruption, and in the process, after conducting extensive studies of county operations, I learned much, much more.

Budish's experience and background is legal. He has been a legislator and an estate attorney. He is trained to make decisions in committee and with consensus. He is not an

executive and he lacks management experience required to run something the size of Cuyahoga County, where unilateral decision-making is often required. For example, problems emanating from Child and Family Services (CFS) continue to be addressed through committee — advisory boards, steering committees, listening tours, etc., etc. and the problems continue to fester with lives on the line. Budish needs to be present, informed, and involved. CFS needs decisiveness, and they need it fast. So do other agencies in the county. You know them — the county jail, Human Resources, IT, and even the property tax people. Overall, senior management, and Budish himself, need a new prescription to solve the ails of the county.

These are NOT difficult problems to resolve with the correct approach. Budish's biggest need is a strong system of transparent communication. This is primarily achieved through a clear organization and clear directions to subordinates (ask any Army general and they will tell you the same thing). The County website posted an or-



New county government still operates like a Rube Goldberg machine

For the County to become more efficient and reduce its propensity toward corruption, it needs to reduce its vast supervisory ranks. As a bonus, ... savings to taxpayers: somewhere between \$30 million and \$100 million per year.

ganizational chart that showed forty people directly reporting to Budish. Add another 19 Boards and Committees where he makes appointments and he is attempting to directly manage and give direction to almost sixty people. At his level, this is far beyond unacceptable — it is utterly impossible. I strongly suspect that his inability to get his arms around county administration has become the

principle driving reason behind the alleged county corruption. I doubt he was looking for this when he started.

Harvard Business School professes that in any organization, an optimal number of subordinates is somewhere between 7-15 people. For Cuyahoga County, with 7,700 employees, this translates, optimally, to about five levels of

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Prescription for Corruptland

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organization. In reality, after discussions with numerous county employees and in-depth interviews with some, nobody really knows how many levels exist. Most County employees do not know the chain of command between themselves and Budish. Many do not know to whom their immediate supervisor reports.

It seems that there are at least seven, and possibly eleven levels or more. The county has perhaps a 5:1 ratio of employee-to-supervisor. When layers upon layers of supervision exist, nothing gets done. Everything is screened, approved, and overseen *ad nauseam*. Each supervisor filters information going upward, and dilutes instruction going downward. Many have carved out lucrative careers generating redundant and unnecessary reports to other mid-level supervisors containing information that will never be used by the relevant authority.

In short, for Cuyahoga County to become more efficient and to reduce its propensity toward corruption, it needs to reduce its vast supervisory ranks, heavily staffed by individuals who often reached their positions through political patronage rather than competence.

There is also a tremendous savings to be had. For example, if the employee-to-supervisor ratio changes from 5:1 to 10:1 in an organization the size of Cuyahoga County, this would eliminate somewhere between 300 and 1,000 employees. At \$100,000 per employee including benefits (salary, health care, retirement, disability), the savings to taxpayers is somewhere between \$30 million and \$100 million per year. Best of all, it's not theoretical; I've done it. Removing mid and senior level management positions through consolidation

of responsibilities immediately improves communications both upward and downward. And since it preserves same number of front line workers (those who are not supervisors), **there is little or no loss of service to the general public.**

The streamlining process should respect the informal contract between the county and its employees. These people have expended the bulk of their careers in public service and most are good. Any replacement plan should be gradual, deliberate, non-threatening, and unwavering. With an older workforce and an attrition rate of about 5%, or 300 per year, the county hiring freeze which I proposed for supervisory and management positions would take care of the problem within about three years simply through lateral transfer and retraining. With only minimal effort, the county could easily realize \$50 million in savings without any layoffs.

As Executive, I would have quickly organized this effort, streamlining, consolidating, and ensuring communication, gaining more time and more clarity of information. It would have greatly enhanced my ability to ask more and better questions, and to get to the bottom of issues such as the IT mess, or the county jail disaster more quickly, avoiding eventual charges of mismanagement or even worse, corruption. The best executives should have one undeniable skill: that is the ability and courage to ask hard questions. With so much confusion and disorganization, Armond Budish either cannot or will not ask the right questions, even if he wants to. Instead, the Feds will do it for him.

Corrigan is a retired senior business executive who has managed large-scale enterprises

both domestically and abroad. An engineer by training, he ran for county executive in 2018, winning the GOP nomination as a write-in

candidate but losing decisively to incumbent Armond Budish in the general election. We wrote about his candidacy [here](#).



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CSU Black Studies Director working to expand cultural literacy

By Nathan Paige
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Cleveland State University's Black Studies Program has a long history of cultural programming that has brought luminaries such as Manning Marable, Molefi Asante, Maulana Ron Karenga, Dr. Na'im Akbar and other scholars to campus and community.

That sense of community connectivity was one of the attractors that helped lure Dr. Thomas Bynum to CSU in the summer of 2017 as the new director of Black Studies, where he manages academic and cultural programming for the Black Studies department. pic

Bynum left a similar position at Middle Tennessee State University to come here. "What makes this program different would be the Cultural Center," he says. "We didn't have a Cultural Center at Middle Tennessee State; it was more of an academic program. Here, there's a lot of cultural programming, which is a plus because it makes a connection with the community."

Bynum has found the move to Cleveland and CSU an easy one. "My transition here has been seamless. Gregory Sadlek, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, has been very supportive of me. I've also received lots of support from the University, and, of course, Prester Pickett, who's taken the time to introduce me to Black Cleveland."

Pickett, coordinator of the Howard A. Mims African American Cultural Center, where the Black Studies department is

housed, assists Bynum in cultural programming.

Bynum feels that the offerings of the Black Studies program fit perfectly into the CSU curriculum.

"We add to the conversation about cultural literacy," he says. "I don't know if one can ever reach a full understanding of the diversity that we have on campus when it comes to cultures, but you still want people to be aware of cultural differences. Students here on campus who are not of African descent need to know about our culture and contributions to this nation, and to the world. I also teach Intro to Black Studies, and that's our foundational class where students are introduced to the history and culture of people of African descent."

Changes to the CSU curriculum under Bynum's guidance include revising the department's major from 36 hours to 30 hours, making it more attractive to students seeking a double major. Also, a book scholarship campaign was created last summer that raised \$4,000, which was divided among four deserving students. There have also been upgrades made to the conference room, and a new study lounge was created.

"We've done a lot to make the program more attractive to the students and getting the word out to the community. And I've instituted something that students look forward to every year: field trips."

In 2018, the Black Studies department organized a trip to the African American Museum in Detroit. This year's trip will be to both the Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati and to Ripley, Ohio where the [John Parker](#) and [John Rankin](#) homes are



"Never become too busy to read for pleasure."

Top: Dr. Thomas Bynum in his office at Cleveland State University.
Bottom: John Rankin House in Ripley, Ohio.

located. Parker, a former slave who later earned US patents, and Rankin, a Presbyterian minister, were key activists on the Underground Railroad, together helping thousands of escaped slaves. pic

"Students love that because you're taking information that you talk about in the classroom, and they can actually go and see it and connect with that history; that's most important," says Bynum.

As part of Black History Month, the Department hosted a free screening of "The Hate U Give" on Feb. 21. On March 21 at 6 p.m., Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson, will visit to discuss her book, "Womanist Preacher," in conjunction with the Ralph Pruitt Lecture Series.

In addition to his roles as director and professor, Bynum is also the author of *NAACP Youth and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1936-1965*, published in 2013.

"I was in grad school and a professor said 'someone should research the NAACP youth movement.' I wasn't aware of the youth movement within the NAACP; the only thing I was familiar with was the legal ac-

tion of the organization, namely court cases," says Bynum. "At the time we were looking at the Civil Rights Movement, focusing on SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), which was another popular youth organization during that time period.

"I took on that challenge, and started researching the youth chapters, and discovered that the Youth Movement of the NAACP dated back to the 1930s, whereas SNCC was formed in 1960. I was fascinated by the research, took it on as my dissertation topic, and expanded from that to write the book."

A resident of Shaker Heights, Dr. Bynum loves to read in his spare time. "An older professor once said to me, 'Never become too busy to read for pleasure.' I also like watching the History Channel. It's work-related sometimes, but it helps me take my mind off some other things," says Bynum. "Occasionally, when my father was alive, I would shoot pool with him, but I could never beat him."

LifeCycles

Milestone

Local attorney set to argue before US Supreme Court this week



Vanessa Malone, a graduate of Cleveland public schools and CSU Cleveland-Marshall Law School, is scheduled to argue before the US Supreme Court

on Wednesday. Malone is the first person in the Federal Public Defender's Northern Ohio District to have an argument accepted by Court. The case, *Mont vs. United States*, involves a statute governing the administration of prisoner rights. You can read her argument [here](#).

Careers



Teresa Beasley, to partner, and head of public law practice group, McDonald Hopkins.



Dionne Broadus to vice president of development and external relations, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.



Nicole Johnson, to personnel director, City of Warrensville Heights.

Death Noted

Edward R. Stege ["Rick"] passed away on February 7, 2019. He worked at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for ten years before entering private practice. One of his two cases before the US Supreme Court was the landmark *Moore vs. East Cleveland* [1977], which established that no city could force its adults and children to live within certain narrowly defined family patterns. A memorial service was held at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights [44120] on Feb. 11.

Community Bulletin Board

Nominations Extended to Celebrate Those Who Give Black

The Soul of Philanthropy Cleveland (TSOPCLE), *Celebrate Those Who Give Black* is extending the deadline for nominations to Thursday February 28. *Celebrate* is a permanent Cleveland exhibition housed in the Cleveland History Center that will tell the story of Black philanthropy in our region by honoring the past, celebrating the present and inspiring the future. It opens September 6, 2019.

Nominations are sought in the following categories: Emerging Philanthropists, Hidden Philanthropists and Youth Philanthropists. Click [here](#) to nominate someone.

The Soul of Philanthropy (TSOP) is a national exhibition that reframes portraits of African-American philanthropy. For more information on the exhibition, visit www.tsopcle.com.

Domestic Violence program set for March 16

The Norman S. Minor Bar Association is presenting a resource and information fair for family and friends of Domestic Violence Victims on March 16 from 2-5p at the Cleveland Public Library, 525 Superior.

Presenters include judges Michelle D. Earley and Marilyn Cassidy of Cleveland Municipal Court; Judge Tonya R. Jones of Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court; Joan Bascone, assistant prosecutor, DV Unit, City of Cleveland; and Roger Stoudmire, a Cleveland Police detective, formerly with the DV Unit.

Karrie Howard, chief prosecutor for the City of Cleveland, will moderate. The program is free and open to the public, but registration is requested here: www.nsmba.org/2019DVFair

THE REAL DEAL PRESS

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Book Review: The Fifth Risk

Worse than you can imagine

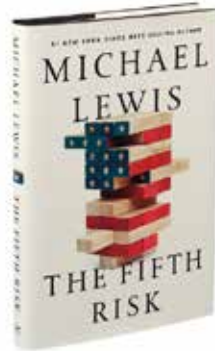
By Roy Van Til
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Michael Lewis long ago proved his ability to master a wide range of intriguing subjects, captivating the public through readable prose that make arcane subjects accessible: Wall Street madness in the 1980s (*Liar's Poker*, 1989), the mathematical transmutation of major league baseball (*Moneyball*, 2003), and the grisly horrors of last decade's housing bubble (*The Big Short*, 2010). So it's no surprise that this skilled weaver of truth and gritty reality would train his keen eye on the biggest story of the decade: a hostile takeover of the strongest nation in the history of the world.

What makes *The Fifth Risk* an essential read is the cold logic and specificity of the role of rational government in American life. Its premise is straightforward: The transition between Trump's election and inauguration was a disaster, the triumph of gross incompetence over rationality, and ignorance over knowledge. His administration's novel approach of enforced head-in-the-sand stupidity in the executive branch is subjecting the country to a self-inflicted threat of inept "project management", the so-called "fifth risk."

Lewis begins with careful explanations of the first four risks that rely on the words of those who know the problems best. His interviews detailing those risks cut to the quick.

Foremost is the real, haunting possibility of a nuclear accident such as a "broken arrow" when a 4-megaton hydrogen bomb



Forget the tweets:
this President has executed a hostile takeover of the strongest nation in the history of the world.

falls from a USAF bomber's wing over a populated area; a story kept classified for 52 years, with the nightmare scenario averted only because the fourth fail-safe check on the explosion worked in that incident in eastern North Carolina in 1961. Second is the increasing potential for a nuclear, biological, chemical, or equally paralyzing cybernetic attack on the USA by a rogue nation (think North Korea). In third place is a nuclear exchange growing out of a regional war centered on Iran and oil-rich Persian Gulf states. And fourth is an attack on America's terribly vulnerable electrical system, on which every aspect of civilized life is critically dependent. Without power, all civilization is whistling past the cemetery, just a few hours away from a human frailty-triggered return to a brutal but intensely weaponized stone age of violence, chaos, and starvation

that would ultimately kill more people than have died in the entire global history of warfare.

Lewis focuses on the cost of bungling the basic managerial responsibilities the federal government must bear in our complex society. But as he focuses on this Administration turning over hundreds of tasks of government to rank amateurs willfully deaf to the laws of the land and science, enormous dangers become apparent. During the ten weeks of turmoil from the election to Inauguration Day, the new administration's hacks entered scores of vital agencies with a slash and burn mentality, dispatched by a president hideously unprepared for the task of running the government.

Equipped in most instances with a total lack of curiosity, and oblivious to the threats their actions represented, Trump's new hires heaved the

detailed briefing books, data, and policy manuals that had served as survival guides and the footprints of genius directly into dumpsters and shredders. The takeover and dismantling of so many research and public service agencies in Trump's rabid quest to erase the Obama legacy makes for a gripping tale of borderline insanity. Those who took over had no training whatsoever in science or math or the subtleties of public policy, but all shared one overriding characteristic: absolute loyalty to the imperial instincts of President Donald J. Trump.

As dramatic as the first section describing this sad spiral of the US executive branch into rank idiocy may be, the second half of the book is even more enthralling. For now the author details what no one on any cable network of legislative chamber or press conference ever mentions: the utterly essential federal jobs that only persons of premier professional preparation, unbounded idealism, and prodigious creativity can perform to keep US citizens alive and well. Many of the key slots have not even been filled more than two years past the election.

The opportunity cost of the coerced departure of the cream of the federal civil service crop as a result of this Trumpian purge is difficult to estimate. It may someday be tabulated in multiple trillions of dollars to be paid out over time in all sorts of irreversibly tragic ways.

In personalized mini-biographies, Lewis presents a cross section of the best and the brightest civil servants, replaced by hundreds of the

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Worse than you can imagine

Continued from Page 6

worst and dumbest of political hacks, including poorly educated conspiracy theorists, small-time grifters, self-entitled relatives of otherwise unremarkable billionaires, etc. Think Betsy DeVos, replicated in a thousand lower level but enormously consequential roles where even subtle mistakes can cripple or destroy thousands of lives.

Lewis introduces the reader to Arum Majumdar of AR-PA-E, an indispensable agency within the Department of Energy. Among other critical assignments, Arum dealt with the long-term horrors from generations of plutonium production at Hanford, Washington and pushed science to its limits to preserve the electrical grid and the viability of that state as a livable place. Lewis phrases the carnage that struck down Majumdar as follows: "Trump's budget, like the social forces behind it, is powered by a perverse desire — to remain ignorant."

You will meet Ali Zaidi, born in Pakistan, who created changes in the massive Agriculture Depart that controls multiple facets of American life from the worsening battle against deadly wildfires to the massive food stamp program protecting millions from starvation. You will meet Kevin Concannon, who shaped the student nutrition program in a valiant attempt to stem the epidemic of childhood and adult obesity that costs untold billions in extra health care costs.

Then there is Cathie Woteki, a nutrition scientist devoted to winning the endless battle against deadly pathogens in the food chain and planning

'Trump's budget, like the social forces behind it, is powered by a perverse desire – to remain ignorant.'

for the coming degradation of prime agricultural lands as the climate continues its inexorable warming trend. The replacement of this consummate researcher and exquisite mind as chief scientist of the USDA by the empty suit Sam Clovis was tantamount to asking your friendly lawn maintenance guy to grab his chain saw and perform a quadruple heart bypass procedure on your father.

Trump took the hatchet to hundreds of billions of dollars worth of sensible and effective initiatives without an apology, allowing the creative ideas and proven programs that would have benefited all Americans, in many cases especially his constituents, either to wither or be eliminated in a mindless orgy of budgetary rape.

You will be in awe reading about the talents of Kathy Sullivan: expert on tornadoes, accomplished oceanographer, and as an astronaut, the first woman to walk in space. Kathy was a dedicated linchpin and voice of reason of the Department of Commerce until the pathetically uninformed pedestrian Wilbur Ross, a Trump crony with ties to the shadowy underbelly of international

banking, took over the department in 2017.

While Trump wears his innumeracy on his tongue, he does have a natural affinity for the lowest common denominator. So it's no surprise that DJ Patil, the country's former Chief Data Scientist, who revolutionized the accuracy of weather forecasting, was replaced by an unqualified but avaricious businessman. Quite apart from what Trump has done to our institutions, our allies, and our image, his administration has turned over the enormous responsibilities the US government carries out to a den of dullards.

American citizens are imperiled by this Administration's regiment of know-nothings and ideologically-driven bullies who are either proud or unaware of their complete lack of knowledge of the basic way things happen and why they occur with regard to radiation, pandemics, climate, electricity, and other incontrovertible physical realities and immutable laws. We owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Lewis for pointing that out so convincingly.

Roy Van Til, Ph.D. ponders the world from Vienna, Maine.

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Cleveland NAACP, Realtists, NBMBA, announce new officers

Several local organizations have announced new leadership for the next few years.

After considerable delay, the **Cleveland NAACP** now has new leadership in place.



The news officers are **Danielle Sydnor**, president; Rev. Jerome Hurst, 1st vice president; Carl Ewing, 2nd vice president; La-Rese Purnell, treasurer; Michelle Kenney, assistant treasurer; Ronisha Jordan, secretary; and Kayla Griffin, assistant secretary.

Frances Holley Blount, Fred Harris MD, Eugene Jordan DDS, Nicky Miller, Donna Kelso Nelson, were elected to the Executive Committee.

The **Cleveland Realtists Association** is set to install its new officers on Feb. 24 in conjunction with its Black History Month observance.

New officers are:

President **Amber Lewis** (A. J. Lewis & Associates); 1st VP Monique Winston (Optima Lender



Services); 2nd VP Deborah Bonner (FASS Real Estate Services); Treasurer Roland Somerville (Prime Lending); and Secretary Ryan Rosenthal (E & D Realty and Investment).

Henry R. Stoudermire Jr. of McMullan Realty Inc. is incoming board chair. Other board members include Robert Abrams (Abrams Appraisal), Layisha Bailey (A. J. Lewis & Associates); Steve Davis; Akil Hameed (FASS Real Estate Services); Doxie Jelks (Keller Williams); Tonya Perkins Stoudermire (New York Community Bancorp); and Jennifer Valentine NID-HCA Valentine).

Others elected to office include: Sergeant at Arms Debra Hamelin (Harvard Title Agency); Barbara Anderson (Another Chance of Ohio); Lionel Lewis (A. J. Lewis & Associates).

Maurice Chevalier Clark has been elected president of the Cleveland chapter of the National Black MBA Association.

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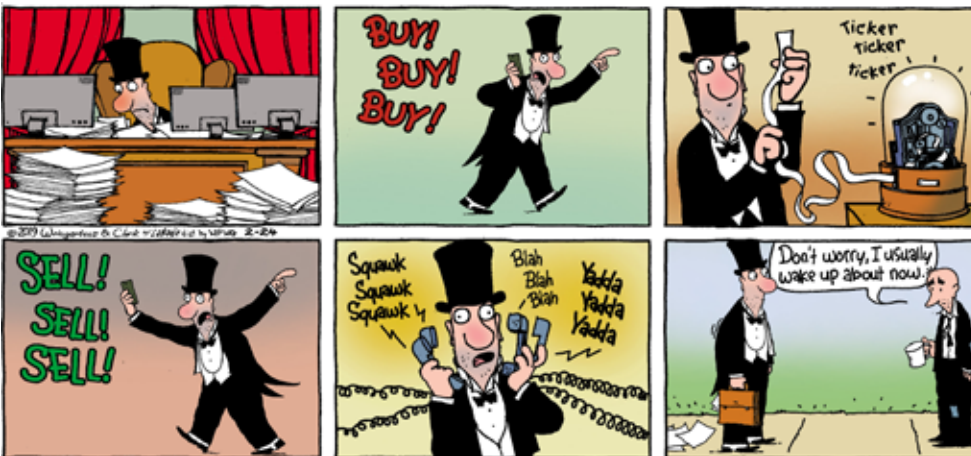
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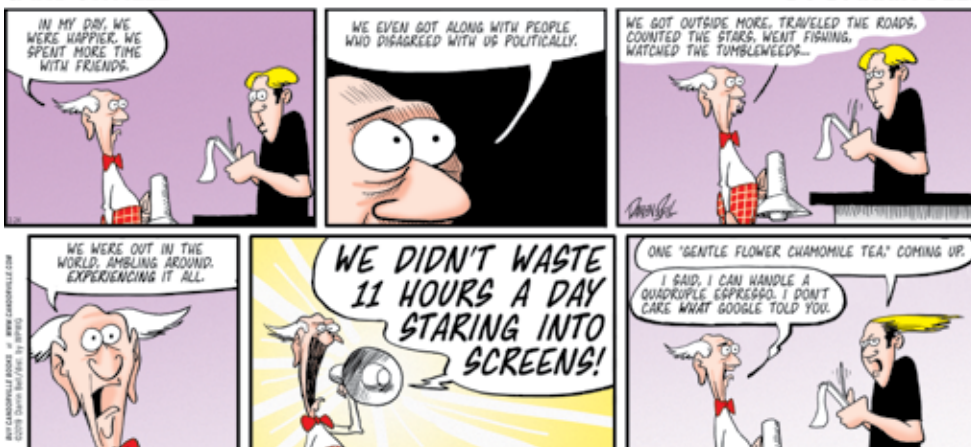
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