THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

OUR DIVIDED POLITICAL HEART:
THE BATTLE FOR THE AMERICAN IDEA IN AN AGE OF DISCONTENT

Washington, D.C.
Tuesday, May 29, 2012

PARTICIPANTS:

Speaker:

E.J. DIONNE
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

Moderator:

TOM MANN
Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. MANN: Good morning. I'm Tom Mann, a senior fellow, as I have been for many years here at Brookings. And I'm pleased to welcome you to this wonderful event: "*Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent,* A Conversation With E.J. Dionne." I can tell you it is always rewarding and fun to have a conversation with E.J. and that's what awaits us over the next 90 minutes.

Let me make note of the fact that this is being live webcast and, as I have been briefed countless times, you all -- at least those disposed to Tweet -- are encouraged to do so. The hashtag is #divheart and there it is right there, thank you for that cue. God, it's seamless, isn't it, the way I handle these things? It's just amazing.

It gives me such pleasure to be in the role of moderating this session on E.J.'s new book. I was thinking about him and how to introduce him this morning and I decided since he is a baseball fan and has a son who is an accomplished baseball player up at Harvard now, that he should be described as the consensus winner each year of the MVP Award in our business. And that business covers a lot of ground.

To remind those of you who aren't as close and familiar with E.J. as many of us in the room are, he's a *summa* grad of Harvard, a Rhodes Scholar and has a Ph.D., albeit in political sociology, from the University of Oxford. He was a reporter for *The New York Times* for 14 years, covering everything from state politics in Albany to Rome and Paris and the Middle East, Lebanon, in particular. Went to work for *The Washington Post* as a reporter, but became a columnist. In about 1993, his syndicated column, at last count, had 144 newspapers and has probably increased since I looked.

But, alas, that in no way captures what E.J. does for a living. He also happens to be a senior fellow in Governance Studies at The Brookings Institution where he has been and is involved in a myriad of projects covering the media, religion, and American politics more generally. Did I mention he's also a university professor at Georgetown University? He is an official pundit at NPR, MSNBC, and *Meet the Press*. He's author or editor of numerous books. I will mention here only his first and his latest.

The first also won an award for the best title. In addition to that, was a bestseller and won *L.A. Times'* National Book Award. He was also a nominee for other awards. It's called, *Why Americans Hate Politics*. It must be the best title of any book I've come upon. E.J. now, after all these years since the publication of that first book, has in some sense come home, returned to his great interest in American political history, in public philosophy, the importance of ideas, and his efforts to link these broad perspectives with contemporary American politics.

He's done it in *Our Divided Political Heart*. It is, indeed, a fascinating book. I got to read it before you all have -- every word of it -- and just enjoyed it immensely, as you will hear what E.J. has done has reminded us that the American idea has always involved a balance between individualism and community. But, alas, there is an imbalance in our system these days and E.J. conveys that as thoroughly and richly as anyone could possibly do. In fact, it's so magnetic, the whole idea of these -- the tension between these two, that E.J. had just written a piece in the Sunday *Outlook* section about it. And on a Sunday morning news show, Senator Richard Lugar explained that, in fact, the problem with the Republican Party is they've forgotten the second part of it, the community, and have emphasized individualism.

So footnotes aren't even necessary at this stage, he's already gotten his ideas into the public domain. I didn't mention, perhaps, the most important thing about E.J., which is that he is the most wonderful, lovely, human being perhaps any of us -- certainly me -- have encountered in these years, and I'm delighted to give him the floor. (Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I love Tom Mann right back. He is one of the greatest people I have ever met and I've said when we did an event for Tom's book that probably the most constructive thing I did to tell people about my book was to write a long quotation on the back of Tom's great book, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*. And, you know, so that you have every reason to doubt political pundits, but I saw how important Norm and Tom's book would be, long before they wrote their *Outlook* piece. Some people in the room are old enough to remember those buttons after Gene McCarthy did well in New Hampshire. Before McCarthy, before New Hampshire, I was for Mann and Ornstein before their *Outlook* piece and I'm very, very proud of that.

And I also want to thank all the people at Brookings who helped organize this event and I particularly want to thank them because I've always wanted a hashtag. I've never had a hashtag before and I had the funniest experience this weekend. Because of this book, I finally decided that I had to stop being a troglodyte and discover social media, so I'm now on Twitter and also tending my Facebook account.

And my wife and I went to New York to see *Death of a Salesman*, the matinee, which is fantastic, by the way, I commend this performance of *Death of a Salesman*. It's really extraordinary. And our train was late, so we got to bed at a quarter to 2:00 and I found myself waking up 11:00 the next morning; 11:00, I hadn't slept to

11:00 since our children were born, and my son is almost 20. And so I came downstairs and I said I'm a teenager again. I'm on Facebook, I'm Tweeting, and I woke up at 11:00 in the morning. And I only wish my joints felt as I was behaving.

I'm just going to talk a little bit about *Our Divided Political Heart*. Incidentally, I know there are a number of teachers in the room and I just want to say that the book -- I have two dedications in the book: one's to my family, but the other is to a whole lot of teachers who were very important to me. And the first three are actually high school teachers: two American history teachers I had and also my English teacher, who, by giving me a very, very low grade on a paper I wrote about the death penalty, inspired me to want to learn how to write, so I wouldn't have to confront this again. And these teachers were very important to me, so I want to commend all of the teachers who are in the room here today.

But this book does come out of a love of the American story and of American history. And there's a kind of paradox in the book because the first sentence in the book refers to American decline, but the book is very distinctly not a declinist book. It's actually a hopeful book about our future. Indeed, I note in talking about decline that we have this conversation about decline over and over again, which actually is a sign of what a high opinion we actually have of our country because we always think we're in a place from which we can decline. And the core argument of the book is that the way we will avoid decline is to refresh our traditional balance, our traditional balance being a balance between our love of individualism and our deep affection for and quest for community.

Out of decline have come some extraordinary politicians and

extraordinary political campaigns. I think Barack Obama's election, in fact, was very much rooted in a sense that he was the person to solve a kind of spiritual crisis that accompanies decline. Because I think when we go through these declinist periods we initially locate the trouble, in particular foreign policy or economic difficulties, which we certainly had galore in 2010, but then we flip it very quickly into a spiritual crisis and we start asking the core question, which we've already heard a lot in this campaign and I think we'll hear right to the end: Who are we?

The debates during periods of decline are about who we are. We reach back into our history for enlightenment in that way. And I wrote this book partly inspired by the Tea Party. And the book is very critical of the Tea Party's view of our history, but I think the Tea Party was right to go back to the origins of the country and we need to have the argument with them. And I think that many on the progressive side -- although not my friend Lane Windom, who is in grad school studying history, but many on the progressive side have kind of left the historical argument to our conservative friends.

Why should our conservative friends be the only people who carry around copies of the Constitution in their pocket? Why do we leave quoting *The Federalist* to conservatives? Why do we leave the Declaration to them? The most forward-looking politicians and moral spokesmen in our history did not do that. I commend to everybody going back to Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the entire first part of that speech is about the promises that the United States made to its people for equality under law. And Dr. King spoke of a promissory note that had been given to African Americans that had come back unpaid, insufficient funds.

Abraham Lincoln's most important political speech before he was

president was his speech at Cooper Union where he went back and made an argument that the Founders ultimately foresaw, as he did, the extinction of slavery in the United States. And Lincoln did months of historical research to give this speech that the historian Harold Holzer thinks made him president, got him the Republican nomination and made him president.

So my core argument is that we are torn by this healthy tension between our love of individualism and our affection for community, and I think we have too often, especially in recent years, told our story almost entirely on the individualistic side. We have emphasized individual liberty to the exclusion of our dedication to community and also equality, which we argue about in every generation.

So I like to remind everybody that the very first word of the Constitution of the United States is not "I." It's not "individual," it's not "liberty." It's "we." The first word in the American Constitution, in the Preamble, is "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare" -- yes, welfare is in the first paragraph of the American Constitution -- "and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution."

The Declaration of Independence, I like to argue, is a perfect reflection of this balance between individualism and community because we're all familiar with the beginning and the commitment to our inalienable rights that come from our creator, "and that among these being life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And that is sort of part of our individualistic nature. But in the very last paragraph of The Declaration of Independence, where the Founders pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred

honor, they understood that we cannot protect individual liberty unless we act together.

You and I must come to the defense of each other's liberty in order to preserve it, and so this is necessarily a communal project we are engaged in. And if you actually care about liberty, you've got to care about the wellbeing of the community.

Now, we've had a parallel argument, particularly in recent years, related to the role of government in our history. And I had a lot of fun in this book going back through the legacies of Hamilton and Clay and Abraham Lincoln and then, also, the populist and progressive legacies.

If you believe that the federal government played little role in the development of our country, you have to write, among others, Hamilton, Clay, and Lincoln out of the national story entirely. If you believe that the Constitution is absolutely clear and can be read only one way, then you have to deal with the fact that within three years of the enactment of the federal Constitution, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison -- two leading interpreters of it in *The Federalist* -- were at each other's throats over whether the federal government had a right to establish a Bank of the United States.

My chapter on the Constitution is called, "One Nation, Conceived in Argument." And I couldn't resist quoting my friend, the legal scholar, Garrett Epps, who said that Justice Scalia and other originalists root their jurisprudence in the idea that I knew the Founders, that the Founders were friends of mine, I know how they think. And I argue that this approach to constitutionalism is inadequate. I even challenge the originalists on originalist grounds, for those of you who are interested in some of these matters.

But Hamilton and Clay were visionaries. They were advocates of what

might be seen as national planning. Henry Clay, for example, had a bold program that he called "The American System." And what's intriguing about this is that he called it "The American System" to distinguish it from the British system, which he said was rooted in *laissez-faire* economics. The American system, as conceived by Clay, was an alternative to pure *laissez faire* because he believed that government had a major role to play, first in building our country.

He wanted the federal government to help a lot with internal improvements: bridges, canals, roads. What a much better word than "infrastructure," by the way. Could we please start talking about internal improvements instead of infrastructure? But he also saw, like Hamilton did, a role for the federal government for building us up as a manufacturing nation. And when -- and, by the way, he came up with revenue sharing long before Richard Nixon did because he wanted to give aid to the states to do a lot of the projects that he felt needed to be done to build up the country.

In frustration once, when his opponents were saying his program was unconstitutional -- and, in particular, his effort to help American manufacturing was unconstitutional -- he said, "Do we live in the only country in the world with a Constitution that is written for other countries, but not for ourself?" And so, like many progressives, including FDR in later years, Clay and others expressed frustration with those who see the Constitution not as a liberating document to encourage self-government, but as a series of chains designed to keep our country in exactly the same condition it was in 1787. I don't think that's how the Founders themselves thought. That's not how we should think about it.

Just a couple of other historical points and I'll close so we can go to the

Q&A. I argue that our friends in the Tea Party are looking back to an exceptional period in our history as typical; that there was one period when kind of radical individualism, which I argue is where the creed that contemporary conservatives in this narrow era, really starting with the end of the Bush years and the beginning of Barack Obama's term, radical individualism really triumphed only in the period of the Gilded Age, in the sort of 35 years from the end of the Civil War to, I would argue, the ascension of Theodore Roosevelt to the White House. And this radical individualism had an enormous effect. It had a great effect on the Supreme Court and its decisions. It's in that period where corporations were declared people, "my friend," if I may quote Mr. Romney.

And it's also in that period -- in the aftermath of that period that the famous Lochner Decision was made. That was in 1905, blowback from the long individualist period, which said the federal government couldn't regulate the hours of workers. And I argue that the populists and the progressives who are seen by our conservative friends and, in particular, our Tea Party friends as interlopers, were actually restoring the longer American tradition of balance that dominated for 235 years.

Herbert Croly, the great progressive thinker who influenced Teddy Roosevelt, argued that progressives sought to use Hamiltonian means to serve Jeffersonian ends. They wanted to use an active federal government in order to ensure greater equality of opportunity and economy not dominated by the trusts or by a very small number of people. And by the way, those who are looking for encouragement in our current debates can go back to some of the things that both Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson said about trusts and concentrated economic power, and Roosevelt and Wilson sound like people hanging out at Occupy Wall Street encampments. It's really

quite astonishing how strong their rhetoric was about the dangers of concentrated economic power. And that's the other part of the American balance.

If we have always sought a balance between individualism and community, we have seen a balance between the state and the market. We have indeed seen government and the market's fear and the independent third sector as partner, not just as adversaries. And that we have used government to check concentrated private power even as we have used constitutional means to check untrammeled government power. And again, it's a series of balances. We balance the state, the local, and the national. And I think we are groping back towards that kind of balance now.

I want to then -- by the way, my friend David Brooks, some of you, if you've read David's column this morning, he kindly mentioned my book and called it "engrossing." And if you're going to have a word with "gross" in it, that's the one you want applied to your book, so god bless David for that. And incidentally, he also plugged Mike Lind's book, and Mike is a really important figure. I'm glad he plugged Mike, even though he disagreed with both of us.

And I just want to take David up on two of our areas of disagreement and then close. He summarizes me well enough and then he takes issue. He says that, "E.J. Dionne, my NPR pundit partner" -- I like that, "pundit partner" -- "argues that the Hamiltonian and Jacksonian traditions formed part of a balanced consensus which has been destroyed by the radical individualists of today's Republican Party." That is what I believe.

Then he goes on to say, "But that balanced governing philosophy was destroyed gradually over the 20th century, before the Tea Party was even in utero, as

government excessively overreached, Republicans became excessively anti-government."

And I guess the question I want to ask David, and will on a blog, is where exactly has government overreached? I don't think David wants to repeal environmental or consumer protection laws. I don't think David believes that we do not need to regulate the securities markets, particularly after what happened in 2008. Maybe he doesn't believe we should provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare, although I believe we do. In other words, I find I sort of fundamentally disagree that what government has done in the New Deal and the progressive, to New Deal to Great Society period to now, represents some kind of -- some set of chains on the economy. Indeed, in this period, as government has grown, in many ways individual liberty grew. As government grew, upward mobility increased. As government grew, more Americans got educated.

Now I quite agree with him, there are better and worse ways to do government. We progressives are not in the business of expanding government for government's sake, but I think the rise of radical individualism comes not primarily from government overreaching, but from a reaction to President Bush, where conservatives could not argue that he failed because he was too conservative, and so had to argue that he failed because he was too much in favor of big government.

The other thing David writes is, "Does government nurture an enterprising citizenry or a secure but less energetic one?" And I would again challenge my friend David on the whole idea that being secure makes you less energetic. I think most -- if there are psychologists in the room, they can correct me, but we generally think that when people are secure, they become more energetic. They have more opportunity

to act in ways that serve themselves, their families, and their communities.

I was struck some years ago when I got this awesome tour of the Silicon Valley and visited a lot of entrepreneurs and the like. I decided in that period that I would view my column from that point forward as a nice little start-up. But something somebody -- what struck me is that security was at the heart of the entrepreneurial world of Silicon Valley because people could take great risks because they knew that if their risks failed, there was something underneath them. All these great engineers could quickly find employment for a while, while they concocted their next new idea. And I mentioned this to someone in the Valley who said, yes, some people have a safety net, we have a safety network. And so I don't believe that security is the enemy of energy or entrepreneurship, but can actually be a kind of commitment to it.

So I just want to close this way. I said the book is anti-declinist and it is. I believe that our history shows us that we are looking for balance as a country, and what's wrong with our politics right now is that one party to the argument really wants to, I think, destroy and replace this traditional American balance and I think we need to defend it. It is that balance, I believe, that created what we came to call "The American Century."

And in writing this book and reflecting on American history, it came to me more and more that being an American is a privilege, but it's also an obligation. When you look at those founding documents and what they were trying to create, when you look at our Founders, who were not reactionaries, but were extraordinarily adventurous people creating a constitutional republic at a moment when most of the world felt that constitutional republics could not work, particularly in an area as large as that of the United States, our founders handed us a promise that we had to keep. And our history

has been a history of the steady expansion of democracy. From the very beginning of our republic we began fighting with each other and ultimately fighting with each other over how democratic our nation would be. And the small “d” democrats won fight after fight after fight.

We first expanded the franchise from property owners to all white men. We eventually expanded the franchise to African Americans after the Civil War, took it away, but then we gave it -- we finally, after years of struggle, returned the franchise to African Americans. We extended the franchise to women. We created much more broad economic opportunity. And I think that different partners in the argument helped us on this.

If the Whigs and the Hamiltonians helped us in understanding the importance of a strong federal government, the Jeffersonians and the Jacksonians reminded us of the importance of equality and democracy. So, yes, we have an obligation to avoid American decline, but above all we have an obligation to the promise of liberty, of community, and of equality that is written -- it was written for us at the very beginning of our national story.

I believe the new generation that is rising up is unusually well-suited to keep this promise. It’s middle-aged or older people that like to think we’re the ones who are balanced. Actually, it’s the younger generation right now who have things in balance. In some ways, they are both the most individualistic and the most communitarian generation in our history. They are the ones more comfortable with technology than those of us who come to Twitter at age 60, yet they quickly form social networks. They are the ones who are accustomed to the entrepreneurial society in which we live.

And yet they are also the generation that has given more time to service than any other that has come along for a long time. And that is not just, as cynics might say, because they had to do so in high school or because they wanted to get into college. In fact, once you begin to serve, this transforms individuals and this has been a generation that has been transformed and could be transformative. And so I believe that we will keep the American promise, and my book is an attempt to remind us of a bold history and of the fact that we are a very interesting people not dominated by a single idea, but by a set of concerns that we know we must uphold together.

And so I thank you all for coming. And I thank Tom for moderating this, and let's have it out about our nation and its future. Thank you so much. (Applause)

I just want you to know that I kept looking at my grad school friend Elaine and when she was nodding, I felt I had approval of a learned graduate student, so thank you. It's always encouraging when you're up on that podium.

MR. MANN: I get to pose a few questions to E.J. that he hasn't seen and has no idea of and then --

MR. DIONNE: Are you now or have you ever been a member of -- no, no, he doesn't do that. (Laughter)

MR. MANN: Then we will turn to you as well as to those here virtually.

E.J., I, too, read David's column with great interest and noted his determination to deny progressives and liberals the link to Hamilton, Clay, and Lincoln. They were into national banks, internal improvements, land grant colleges to really assist agriculture, but not all that other stuff. Yet I recall reading in your book that there was a lot of other stuff going on from the very beginning of the republic in which government

played a role in what might be called the social safety net now.

MR. DIONNE: Well, thank you for that question. First, let me say a couple of things. David is a real friend, so it's not just that we pretend to be on the radio. I really like David a lot. And actually, when I finished this book I told him that doing the book was worth it if only for one thing, which is that I finally figured out why David was so cross-wise to contemporary politics: because he is the last surviving thorough-going American Whig. And if you want to -- and I meant that, and he took it as a compliment. Because if you want to understand David, you really should go back to Hamilton, Clay and Lincoln. And I think that is where David is coming from and I am very proud of the fact that my book is probably the only book in a long time, other than Geoffrey Kabaservice's book on moderate Republicans, in which Jacob Javits plays an important role.

I was much taken many year ago by a book Javits wrote in 1964 called, *Order of Battle,* where he was arguing that Republicans are actually the party of small "d" democratic nationalism. And he talked about the ancestors of the Republican Party and he invoked Hamilton, Clay, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. I should also note that no one other than the president of the Osawatomie, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce was as excited as I was when President Obama gave that Osawatomie speech in honor of the speech that Teddy Roosevelt gave in 1910 because I wanted President Obama to give a speech like that for a long time. So I was grateful for that.

But here's where I think David's right and here's where I think he's wrong. He's right that it is a mistake for liberals to pretend that Hamilton and Clay are liberals. We liberals like to invoke them on behalf of national action and the Whigs

deserve better than they've gotten because they were also advocates of far better treatment for the mentally infirmed and insane. They were advocates of public schooling. They really were forward-looking in so many ways, but they were also in certain ways fundamentally conservative. They did see themselves as serving the interests of a certain part of the upper class.

I doubt that the Whigs would be comfortable with some of the directions that American liberalism has taken, but I'm grateful that you asked the questions because I think David is wrong in suggesting that there wasn't any social welfare inherent in the early American republic. The favored fact I learned -- or one of my favorite facts I learned in writing this book was from a great book I commend to you by Brian Balogh, called *The Government Out of Sight*. He's an historian at the University of Virginia.

And I had never known that it's a sort of a quiz. When do you think the very first federal health care program was enacted? Just think about your answer. The answer is in 1798. 1798. I guess 10 years after the adoption of the Constitution, John Adams created the National Health System for Sick and Injured Seamen. I want to go back and look at what it was about people on boats that got the Congress' attention, but we essentially had socialized medicine for seamen back in 1798. And as I wrote in the *Outlook* piece yesterday, I do not recall any mass rallies against Adams-care back in 1798. (Laughter)

Jump forward to the period after the Civil War -- and a great political writer, Theda Skocpol has called people's attention to this some years ago -- the Federal Civil War Pension Program was vast. It consumed, I believe, if I remember right, in 1794, it consumed 37 percent of the federal budget. Now that's an entitlement program. It

served at its peak 28 percent of American families -- or I think it was American men, but later it was extended to families. So we have had -- and I don't know what you'd call the Homestead Act, but that was a big government giveaway of land so that people could come and own their own land. And land grant colleges are an interesting case where I think David and I very much agree. On the one hand, they are very much a part of that build-the-country-up tradition of Clay and Hamilton that David and I both like.

But this also created a very large public benefit. Again, it allowed lots of Americans in the interior, who did not have access to higher education, to have access to higher education. And without that original law, some of our greatest state universities might not exist. So I do think -- I don't draw quite the same clear line as David does between these two, you know, between the liberal tradition or the progressive tradition and Hamilton and Clay, even though he is right to remind us that they are not identical.

MR. MANN: Now I'd like to fast forward to the last couple of decades, decades -- at time period, say, when Robert Nisbet was writing *The Quest for Community*, but Ayn Rand was also out there sort of popularizing libertarian ideas. So Nisbet spoke for the conservatives, in many respects Republicans, yet now his ideas have seemingly been abandoned by conservatives and Republicans. Why? What happened? How do you account for it?

MR. DIONNE: Nisbet, for those of you who have never read him, the best way to get at Nisbet is a great book of essays called *Tradition and Revolt*, which is a good summary. It's a collection of essays and it's a good summary of where he was coming from. He was at AEI for a number of years.

It's interesting, I got to know him. He was somebody I ran across in

college and really got to like, even though I was not on the right side of the political spectrum. And I got to meet him and he said the great irony is the new left, which he strenuously opposed, brought *The Quest for Community* back into print. It had been published in 1952, had gone out of print. And because of the new left's interest in participatory democracy and community, the early statement of the new left, the Port Huron Statement, is still, I believe, a fascinating document before the new left kind of went nuts. It sort of reflected the deeply democratic nature of the early part of that movement. And they were the people who got Nisbet back into print, which he was always amused by.

You know, and Nisbet is also a kind of historical sociologist and he makes the case that conservatism at the beginning was actually a revolt against liberal notions of community. It was revolt against individualism that conservatives posited the importance of family and status and traditional community, but also he wrote that society is prior to the individual, which is quite the opposite of Mrs. Thatcher said, there is no such thing as society. And I think that what you've seen is more and more conservatives certainly are uncomfortable with the idea of the centrality of society, but also of community as a defining characteristic of conservatism.

Now, again, in fairness, there's a wonderful guy in town called Bill Schambra, who is sort of -- in some ways he and Mike Gerson are among the last of the true communitarian conservatives. And there is a debate among progressives like me and conservatives like Bill Schambra about the role of federal and national action in fostering community. I believe, with Theda Skocpol and others, that actually the federal government far from simply sapping the power of local communities, as my friend Bill

Schambra would argue, I believe the federal government has often empowered local communities. Skocpol uses a great example of the GI Bill, which was lobbied for by the American Legion and whose enactment strengthened the American Legion organization around the country. And you can see a whole series of groups out of the progressive era that because they were national federations became stronger at the local level and that the progressives, contrary to the conservative view, cared not just about some national oneness, as my friend Schambra likes to parody us, but they created a lot of vital local organizations. Indeed, they were obsessed with local government and, you know, progressives tried to take over cities and towns, create municipal electrical systems, kind of governed by the citizenry and so on.

Now I think that capitalism has -- capitalism, I'm sorry. See, that's a Freudian or a Randian slip. (Laughter) Conservatism has partly been dominated, I believe -- I don't think the rise in political money is irrelevant to this. I also believe our national business class has moved to the right of where it used to be. Business is not inherently reactionary. Business is part of America. There are in many -- in the town I grew up in, the Chamber of Commerce was really important to us in -- you know, I may have disagreed with them at times on matters related to labor law, but they were vitally concerned with the health of their communities. They wanted people working and making money because that's how the downtown businesses thrived. I think American business has moved to the right of where it was in opposing regulation more forcefully. You know, perhaps one can fairly point to the difference between George Romney and Mitt Romney as reflecting that change. There's a wonderful piece on George Romney's tragic 1968 campaign in New York -- in the new issue of *New York* magazine where you

really see that difference.

And then obviously the popularity of Ayn Rand. Bill Buckley and I agree on certain issues and one of them is disagreeing passionately with Ayn Rand. And whenever somebody tells me they love Rand, I always ask them did you ever read her book *The Virtue of Selfishness*? And that tells you a lot about Ayn Rand, and I'll just leave it at that and pray that I'm not assaulted by some Randian who said I was unfair to her, which perhaps I was, but I don't think so. Go ahead.

MR. MANN: Thank you. E.J., you talk about the healthy tension between individualism and community, and the secret of American success is balancing those two ideas, elements, virtues. But presumably, the point of balance will differ between our two major political parties and between conservatives and liberals operating as you would hope to see them. How would you just in shorthand language distinguish the balance that conservatives might arrive at in a very constructive, healthy way versus that which liberals, progressives, Democrats -- call them whatever you'd like -- would?

MR. DIONNE: You know, I'm glad, again, you emphasize balance because I don't think any of us would want to live in an absolutely purely communitarian society. And indeed, I argue that one of the greatest experiments in communitarianism in American history was Prohibition and it failed, and it was an attempt. And it's worth remembering that a lot of the advocates of Prohibition were progressive. It wasn't just very conservative people who advocated. There were people who saw the damage liquor was doing to the downtrodden and to working class and poor families. These were progressive people, had a lot of other progressive ideas. So it was a noble quest, but it didn't work out very well.

And, you know, I think it's important to underscore that liberals and progressives have always been vitally interested in individual rights. But they have not been interested in individual rights to the exclusion of the good of the community.

In the course of writing the book and partly from reading my colleague Jonathan Rauch's work on gay marriage, it occurred to me that gay marriage is in some ways the quintessentially American movement. Because liberals who would tend to view it purely -- traditional liberals would tend to view it purely as an individual rights move whereas when I look at where the gay movement went, they went toward marriage and they went toward service in the military. They weren't just asking for an individual right. They were asking for an opportunity to join the broader community and to bear the responsibilities that came from membership in that broader community. There were a lot of people in the gay community initially who didn't like the marriage movement because they thought it was giving in to certain more conservative norms. And I thought service in the military was just, you know, so important to the progress of the gay community because they were saying we are Americans, we want to serve equally with our fellow Americans.

Now, to go to your question, it seems to me the argument right now is do we believe in balance or not? And I think older -- you know, the conservatism of not so long ago accepted a substantial role for the state, accepted that there were things we needed to do in common because we could not do them alone, and we argued forcefully about where government stopped and where the local community began. We argued forcefully over how progressive these public programs should be. We argued forcefully about how should we raise tax money. There are a lot of things to argue about. I am not

for a one-party state of balance. I love argument. I'd go out of business if argument went out of business.

But I think that we have to operate within some consensual framework, a very broad consensual framework, in order to make progress. Because if we don't figure out together kind of the boundaries of the consensus, then we end up like we did last summer with the debt ceiling fight, where one side believes so strongly that the other side is outside the framework of what's good for the country that it is better to risk, you know, the nation's credit and all the mess that would have come from defaulting than it is to give in anywhere. If we are operating in a consensus, we could have a fight over budgets, about how much -- in order to restore a long-term reasonable balance, how much should come out of cutting programs, how much should come out of revenue. How should that revenue be raised? I might argue for more progressive taxes. My friend Bruce Bartlett, a conservative, would argue for more consumption taxes. And we could sort of work something out, but we'd be operating within, broadly, a framework in which we would at least be speaking the same language. Right now we have the politics of the Tower of Babel, I think. And that just -- that doesn't work well in a democracy.

MR. MANN: That leads seamlessly to my last question, which is a cue to you all to think about your questions because you come immediately after this. Now let's carry that to the 2012 presidential and congressional --

MR. DIONNE: You think there might be some interest in the election in this? Yeah, we could talk about 1912, it was a great election, but.

MR. MANN: It was, but alas --

MR. DIONNE: Tom and I used to write about 1912 together. Yes, our

pre-Brookings days.

MR. MANN: I mean, I gather from what you've said that Paul Ryan's budget is outside that framework in which we can actually engage in the kind of debate and negotiation compromise that Mitt Romney's campaign, as best we -- and his agenda, as best as we identify it at this stage, before the convention and everything else, is, in many respects, also outside that framework. One, is that true? Is that what you believe? And two, do you think that will be engaged in the campaign and should it be?

MR. DIONNE: See, you should all know Tom is my colleague down the hall and we agree so often that I find -- some of you may remember this old Bob Dylan line, which went, "No use in talking to you, same as talking to me." (Laughter) And I sometimes -- so Tom knows how I'm going to answer that question. Tom and I agree enough that we actually relish the moments when we disagree and try to dwell on them because they're fun. (Laughter)

Obviously I do think that a proposal like the Ryan budget is outside the framework that I'm talking about. And I'd love to -- I suspect Paul Ryan doesn't and I suspect he would argue that, well, he still believes in some kind of government support and that he is merely trimming that back. But it seems to me the implications over the long haul are that you take a series of federal programs that we have come to take for granted and render them so unextensive that they cease to be the programs that they are now. I mean, those cutbacks are very deep.

But it also goes to the question of, you know, what kind of society do we want to have? Brian famously talked about these social welfare programs as a hammock. And first of all, I don't see a whole lot of very, very poor Americans spending

a whole lot of time on their hammocks. The most poor Americans actually work for a living.

And secondly, and it goes back to the argument I had with David Brooks, which is the implication is always that government programs necessarily create dependency. And I actually believe government programs have often been crafted in our history to create independence. And whether you go back to the Homestead Act, which created a nation of small landholders; or the GI Bill, which allowed people who could never have gone to college to go to college and to prosper on their own; and student loans, which we need to reform because we're going to create a nation of debtors if we don't get a handle on that, but student loans when I was -- you know, were essentials, you know, a scholarship and loans were essential to my ability to go to college; or the Social Security survivor's benefits, which have allowed many families to get through tough times and become self-sufficient again. And so, you know, I believe that common, mutual support is not aimed at creating personal dependency. It's our efforts to help each other get a leg up in the world. And it sees us as, if I may quote Saint Paul, as being all part of one another.

And I do think that the American communitarian tradition has sort of, you know, two sets of roots. One is the small "r" republican tradition that talked about self government and the need to think of the whole and not simply ourselves, but also the Biblical tradition.

And actually maybe I will close this by reading from John Winthrop, who gave a speech in 1630 that I suspect Rush Limbaugh would condemn as socialistic. And so I just want to find one of my favorite quotes in the book.

And it's worth noting that the Winthrop speech in which he said this is the City on a Hill speech that Ronald Reagan liked to quote, and yet this is one of the most communitarian pronouncements.

MR. MANN: '77 or '78?

MR. DIONNE: Yes, exactly.

MR. MANN: Or '98?

MR. DIONNE: Let's see, '77 or '78. I'm sorry to hold you up. I should have marked this page. The pages are stuck. I should have also taken an old, well-thumbed copy of the book.

It was a speech called "The Model of Christian Charity." And John Winthrop said, "We must delight in each other, make each other's conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body."

And Bruce Springsteen just came out with a great song that I love, where the refrain is, "Wherever this flag is flown, we take care of our own." I think there is a direct line from John Winthrop in 1630 to Bruce Springsteen in 2012. (Laughter and applause)

MR. MANN: Well, I so happy that E.J. invoked Saint Paul and that we -- it's a way of reminding us that this book is filled with discussions of religion as well because it connects so much to the subject before us. Okay.

MR. DIONNE: Although for those who are here who aren't as obsessive about religion as I can be, it is not primarily a religious book.

MR. MANN: Right.

MR. DIONNE: I have written those before.

MR. MANN: That was the last book.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, right, exactly.

MR. MANN: He sold out.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah.

MR. MANN: Yes, sir. Please, we have a mic we're going to bring to you. It will help us with the webcast. Please identify yourself and pose your question to E.J.

MR. PROCTOR: Hi. I'm Bob Proctor. I'm a student at Johns Hopkins University. I was wondering --

MR. MANN: What are you studying, could I ask?

MR. PROCTOR: Oh, public policy.

MR. MANN: Okay.

MR. PROCTOR: My question was how influential would you say the Reagan administration was, you know, saying things like government is the problem, in the rise of the new wave of radical individualism?

MR. DIONNE: No, it's a good question because Reagan has a kind of ambiguous role in my account because, on the one hand, he clearly prepared the way for this and that there's always been a radical individualist strain within American conservatism. It goes back to reaction to the New Deal. A woman called Kim Phillips-Fein, a great young historian, wrote a book called *Visible Hands*, I think it was -- or *Invisible Hands*, about the role of certain kinds of right wing business groups in creating the ideology that today is in many ways the Tea Party ideology, and Ronald Reagan reflected a lot of that. But even Ronald Reagan, I think, ended up operating within the

long American consensus.

I've always loved the line that Wagner's music is better than it sounds. (Laughter) And Reagan governed in a more moderate way than he spoke and that, in the end, he didn't overturn the New Deal, the core New Deal programs. He was very alive to the importance of the communitarian strain in conservatism. If you remember the great speech he gave in 1980 at the Republican Convention. It was family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom.

And one of things I talk about in the book is what I see as sort of the last great project of the more communitarian conservatives, which was AEI's Mediating Structures Project; a little book by Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus called *To Empower People*, which I argue was the manifesto for the Reagan Democrat before the Reagan Democrat existed. So, yes, Reagan had this in his rhetoric, but still was much more part of the balanced conservative tradition, and I think that we've moved beyond even where Reagan was. Reagan might have been this in the period he was giving speeches for G.E. in the '50s, but he didn't govern that way. He governed -- again, I don't want to pretend -- I know my conservative friends hate it when those of us who are liberal quote Ronald Reagan for our purposes, and so I don't want to pretend I'm a Reagan supporter. There were a bunch of things he did that I opposed in terms of shrinking the state in ways that I think were not constructive, but I still don't think he's gone as far as our conservative friends are going now.

MR. MANN: That was the absolute model of question-asking and answering, so let's continue with that. Yes, sir, on the aisle.

MR. SQUIRES: Greg Squires, George Washington University. I'd like to

ask you given the number and range of people who benefit from government programs, given the changing demography of our country, and given Romney's insistence on demonstrating how out of touch he is, how do you explain the fact that the polls seem to show that if the election were held today it's a toss-up?

MR. DIONNE: Well, 8 percent unemployment takes you a good ways there. But also, you know, I am struck by the fact that when you hear conservatives, Republicans talk about cutting entitlement programs they seem to want to hold harmless anyone who is now over 65 years old. Now why is that? Well, you know, partly for historical reasons, when people come to adulthood that is part of the conservative base now. So they're not talking about -- although Democrats will try very hard to argue that the cuts they propose will ultimately threaten those now over 65. The fact is they're staying away from those kind of cuts.

And, you know, there are a lot of studies that show that many Tea Party supporters are strongly opposed to government except for Medicare and Social Security, which they view as benefits they earned when they worked and not really part of government in the way that programs for others might be. And, you know, one could argue, I would argue that I think there's a bit of a contradiction there, but we all live with contradictions, and so I sort of accept that others do. So, you know, I think that's part of it.

And I think, you know, part of it is economic bad times. And part of it is if John McCain could get 46 percent of the vote in 2008, which was about the worst election climate for a Republican to be running in -- exhaustion with the war, exhaustion with President Bush, the financial collapse, and Sarah Palin on his ticket, by the way

(Laughter) -- he still got 46 percent. So we are divided right now. And I think it's very hard for either party to fall below something above 45 percent.

My hunch is that the Obama base is just a little bigger than the Romney base when you -- you know, and that you're seeing that in the 3 or 4 percent differential in the polls. But it is -- times are very bad in certain states. One advantage Obama my have is that, on the whole, the economies are better in the swing states than in the others. I asked an Obama person jokingly recently if their economic policy was designed to make sure unemployment went down quicker in the swing states and, of course, the federal government doesn't have that power.

MR. MANN: Is someone from Oxbridge here that has a question? All the way in the back.

MR. DIONNE: Do we have a Oxbridge contingent?

MR. MANN: We have many.

MR. DIONNE: Ah.

MR. MANN: Yes, a contingent.

MR. DIONNE: We papered the crowd with Oxbridge people, that's why.

MR. KINOONAN: Hi. I'm Jesse Kinoonan from the University of Glasgow. You were talking about the balance between individuals and the community, so I would like to ask is the concept of the American dream solely linked to the individual? And would the greater emphasis of the community threaten that ideal?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I love -- Glasgow is one of the great communitarian cities in the world, I think. I actually campaigned -- spent a day campaigning with Margo MacDonald in a neighborhood in Glasgow called Govan, which

you know, who's a fascinating Scottish nationalist. But that's for another day.

MR. MANN: MVP, I told you.

MR. DIONNE: My book is very much about arguing a case for a particular -- for a definition of the American tradition that encompasses both individualism and community. And let me just quote my friend Paul Begala, who wrote a very nice column on this book, which I was grateful for. And I was talking to Paul about the book and he said, you know, Paul spends a lot of time in Texas politics and he said there are two speeches you can give in Texas and both of them resonate. And he said speech one is we came down here, we were self-sufficient, we built our own farms, we took care of ourselves, and we prospered, and, by god, everybody should be like that. You can also tell the story by saying we came down here and when we came down here, we came in covered wagons; and when we faced adversity, we circled the wagons and we fought together; and when we moved into these communities, we built towns and the first person we brought in was a teacher to teach all the kids so the community could advance themselves. Those are both deeply authentic American stories that contain pieces of our truth. And I think the American dream encompasses both of those stories. But thank you for the question.

MR. MANN: Bill, yeah.

SPEAKER: Yes, I'd like to move to Reagan and religion.

MR. DIONNE: These are one of the great scholars, by the way, of American religion and the Catholic Church, so it's a privilege to have you here.

SPEAKER: In the '80 campaign Reagan could not go to the Catholic bishops, who were -- had pushed Carter to get Carter to consider an amendment to do

away with *Roe v. Wade*. But Reagan knew if he went to the Catholic bishops he'd get the abortion opposition, but he would have to also work with them on peace issues and all the social justice issues that were in the bishops' package. So he went to instead the evangelicals.

Now, it's quite clear that, in fact, Bill Brock negotiated with Jerry Falwell, *et al.*, what did the Republican Party need to do to get the evangelicals into the party? And the package appeared to be -- well, in the first place, they had to rebuild our military because Carter had cut the military budget and so they needed to rebuild the military to save us from the Communists, 1980. And then they were looking for an anti-abortion position and they were looking for positions on all the key committees. And it seems to me that's what they got in their package and that we have paid for that ever since because it seems to me their control is what led to the polarization before Reagan's administration was over. I've been looking at votes and it seems to be (inaudible).

MR. MANN: Good. Yeah, E.J.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, let me just move that. There's a long conversation to be had about changes in the Catholic Church, where -- I am a Catholic and I think that one of the reasons I am so -- have always been so interested in communitarian ideas is because I am. I think that Catholicism is, at heart, a deeply -- has a deeply communitarian view of the social order. And I think from a Catholic communitarian point of view, you know, a good representative of that was Cardinal Bernardin way back in the '80s, who argued that there was a seamless garment that involved the protection of life from the moment of conception all the way to the moment of natural death and not simply for the first nine months of pregnancy. And I think there's been a movement, because of

new appointments, if you will, a movement to the right among the Catholic bishops, where bishops who wrote a very progressive set of documents on war and peace and economy back in the ’80s would not write those kinds of documents today.

But let me just make one comment, if I could, off your question, which is I am fascinated by, and I talk about this in the book, about Christians who end up -- Christian conservatives who end up aligning essentially with radical individualists in politics, which strikes me as strange. Because if you look at the Christian tradition or the Hebrew prophets, it seems totally at odds with a radical kind of individualism. And it did occur to me that there are strains within a kind of American evangelicalism, which also affects Catholicism, that are individualistic in their emphasis on salvation. I came to the notion that there is a distinction between those who say I’m Christian because Jesus changed my life and those who say I’m Christian because Jesus changed the world.

Now, there are people, like my friend Mike Gerson, who might argue both of those things, but Mike has a strong communitarian streak in him. But there is -- and then if you look at our evangelical tradition, that is a real change because the evangelicals -- William Jennings Bryan, one of the leading American fundamentalists, was also deeply progressive. He’s the guy who really pulled the -- began to pull the Democratic Party away from conservatism and toward progressivism. But I think that there was a kind of theological transformation toward a more purely individualistic approach to salvation that allowed some Christians on the -- you know, the more Christian conservatives to feel quite at home with a kind of individualism.

And I know it’s more complicated than that and it has to do with politics and alignments and which party ended up being pro life and which ended up being pro

choice. But I think there is this interesting -- it's something I want to think about more, but I explored some in the book.

MR. MANN: Good, thank you. Yes, right here, please.

MS. WINDOM: Hi. Lane Windom and I'm a graduate student at the University of Maryland.

So, E.J., I wanted to thank you so much for your note of hopefulness about young people and their individuality and their communitarianism. I also -- it struck me that this generation is probably one of the first generations that won't do as well as their parents. And I wondered if you could talk a little bit about the growing income divide and economic insecurity and what that means for the health of our democracy.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I think that your question goes to a lot of things, but one of them is how do we argue about the Constitution? One scholar, who's also a friend whose work interests me greatly, is Willy Forbath, who teaches law down at the University of Texas and has done, actually, a lot of work on labor. And Willy makes a case, which I quote in the book, that originalists have been successful in the public argument not just because it makes a certain intuitive sense that judges should do what the Constitution says, which gets us sort of -- which somehow pushes back on the problem that there are conflicting parts of the Constitution, conflicting values in the Constitution, and all that, but it's not just that. He argues that the originalists also have a kind of traditionalist conception of what it means to be American, and that those of us on the progressive side who want to have an argument with them and want to sort of push back against what we see as the chains that the originalists want to place on us in our efforts to create a more just society, have to have a different view of the Republican

tradition that underlie the Constitution.

And the Founders clearly believed, and that this was a Jeffersonian as well as a Hamiltonian idea, that in order to govern ourselves successfully in a democratic republic -- republic being less democratic then than it is now -- people needed certain capacities. They needed a certain amount of income and wealth. They needed a certain standing in the community. They needed a certain amount of education. So that if you want our great experiment to thrive, you cannot have a society of radical inequalities. You cannot have a society in which some are deprived of the sort of basic background needs to become a self-governing citizen.

And so this becomes not simply about -- and for me personally this is a good enough argument, that you want greater justice in the society and less inequality, but it's not just about that. It's about what does it take to be a self-governing republic? And that's where, I think, where I like to see those of us who are progressive take the argument for equality because we will be something other than a fully effective self-governing republic if we let economic inequality get out of hand, and that's what we've always argued as Americans. It's what Jefferson argued, it's what Lincoln argued. And so that's where I'd like to take the argument. It's sort of a commonwealth sort of argument in a way.

MR. MANN: Yeah. We're going to take a question here. Go ahead, please. Mic is on its way.

MR. DIONNE: We could also, because -- at some point take --

MR. MANN: I'll gather a few.

MR. DIONNE: -- a few just to get --

MR. MANN: But we're doing well. We have 15 minutes left.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, I don't want to miss anybody. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: So if the modern conservative movement, let's say it was born in the post-war period, a galaxy of thinkers -- William F. Buckley, Willmore Kendall, Frank Meyer, Irving Kristol in '75 with the public interest -- there's a whole galaxy of people who actually launched an attack against liberals and liberalism precisely for what they see as its exaggerated individualism. So I wanted to ask you about the complexity.

MR. DIONNE: It is so fun to have somebody quote Willmore Kendall. His name does not come up often at The Brookings Institution, so bless you. I love the history of American conservatism.

SPEAKER: So I was wondering what you thought about their attack against individualism as they saw it, exaggerated in the hands of post-war liberals.

MR. DIONNE: Well, I have always -- that's the strain of conservatism that I have a certain empathy, sympathy for, again, up to a point. I mean, I actually got to give a lecture at a tribute to Bill Buckley and I told them the whole thing was clearly stacked because it was all conservatives and me, and they knew that I had a kind of love affair with Bill Buckley going way back. You know, my goal in life is to be about 5 percent as effective for progressives as Bill Buckley was for conservatives.

And there were problems with that traditionalist view that were reflected in Buckley's early opposition to civil rights, which he later renounced. And that sort of the problem with communitarian conservatism rooted in traditionalism is that some of the traditions are defective. You know, racism can be seen as rooted in a tradition that was defective. A rejection of the equality of men and women is rooted in a certain tradition

that is defective. And so this is where I am a liberal and arguing with the conservatives on the need that tradition -- I value tradition. I think it should not be overturned lightly, but it sometimes needs to be overturned.

Where I agree with them is that I don't think that our system, the welfare state itself, can be defended purely in individualistic terms. It's why in the book I talk about the communitarian roots of the gay rights movement, the communitarian roots of the civil rights movement. I mean, Dr. King was very much preaching about individual rights for African Americans, but he was also preaching about not only transforming the African-American community, but he was talking about transforming the entire country into what he liked to call "the beloved community." And so I do think that those of us who believe in individual liberty cannot depend solely on -- purely on an individual rights tradition, and that's where I end up with some sympathy.

And Buckley, one of the last books Buckley wrote was one of his most beautiful books, a book called *Gratitude*, where he very much talked about the debts we owe society for the protection and opportunity that it has accorded to us. And probably my favorite Buckley among Buckleys, although the guy was very funny and quippy, is the Buckley of *Gratitude*.

MR. MANN: Yeah. Yes, sir. Oh, well, I was signaling -- yes, please. There he is.

MR. GRINDSTAFF: Hugh Grindstaff. I was a conservative once. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: It's like an AA meeting. (Laughter)

MR. GRINDSTAFF: And on my iPhone I've got all the books I had about

-- *Conscience of a Conservative*, and I was a fan of Bill Buckley at one time. All this stuff -- and then I got a little call from Uncle Sam saying we need you in Vietnam. I became more communitarian because that's a community you sort of have to depend upon.

And Amitai Etzioni, who's the minister of -- a communitarian, but nowadays logic -- when you have a president who has got us out of one war and who is getting us out of another war, who's trying to get benefits for veterans, but yet Romney leads in the polls amongst veterans, banks, what JPMorgan just did, it didn't involve U.S. money, guaranteed money, but it did involve investors' money. And those investors who lose their savings have to have a network to depend upon.

So how can you say -- how do we put logic back into American politics?

MR. DIONNE: We've probably asked that question since 1787 or 1776. Incidentally, I don't know if I quoted in the beginning, my very, very favorite line on America is from Winston Churchill, who said Americans always do the right thing after first exhausting all of the other possibilities. (Laughter) So we eventually get there. And actually Tocqueville talked about our capacity for self-correction as one of our greatest gifts as a country. So that's why I'm kind of congenitally hopeful about us. You know, the real problem is how long will the long run be before we get there.

Just a couple things. People vote the way they vote for a lot of different reasons. And one of the problems with saying veterans are voting for Romney, I have no reason to doubt that that poll is accurate, but are they voting for Romney because they're veterans or are they voting because they are disproportionately Southern or are they voting because they are religious conservatives?

In other words, I think, for example, a lot of evangelical Christians began

voting Republican in 1964 because they were Southern conservatives who were opposed to the civil rights laws and liked Barry Goldwater. It had nothing directly to do with their being evangelical Christians. And I think that, you know, certainly the officer corps in our military is drawn disproportionately from Republican groups in the country. I think that is beginning to change a little bit.

I've been struck at how popular my friend Rachel Maddow's book, *Drift*, is among military folks. My sister who served in the Navy JAG Corps said that she was struck that a lot of her friends, who are quite conservative -- my sister is a moderately liberal Democrat, but she was in the minority in the military -- said that they are very taken by this because of their feelings about what's happened over the last 10 years. So I think that may be changing.

But also, none of us votes purely on our economic interests. You know, I am fascinated by Tom Frank's work. I think Tom has a lot to teach us and he very kindly blurbed my book. But I've thought a lot about, you know, people who vote on grounds other than their immediate self interests. Well, I live in a precinct in Bethesda, Maryland, that is exceedingly affluent and voted 80 percent for Barack Obama. Now, were we voting against our -- and I would argue that in the long run we are voting for our interests broadly understood. But my conservative friends would say you've got to broadly understand it pretty broadly to vote Democratic if you live in a precinct that affluent.

And so I think that people vote for a number of reasons and they also define their interests differently, and that for some people -- and again, I agree with a lot of what Tom says about progressives being too allergic to populism. And I have a chapter on populism that's more sympathetic to the populists than say the Richard

Hofstadter account. I find -- I hugely admire Hofstadter, love him as a writer, wish -- I hope -- I try to emulate him in that way, but disagree with some of his conclusions. You know, so I agree with Tom that progressives can be too allergic to populism.

Nonetheless, I think that there are perfectly good justifications for people voting what they see as their values and be more interested in that in voting their economic interests as you might define them.

MR. MANN: Yeah. Now we're going to have a final round. I'm going to collect a number of brief questions. Come on up here, please. Let's give Gary the first one.

E.J., we've got to take notes.

MR. DIONNE: Oh, yes, thank you.

MR. MANN: Short questions and --

MR. DIONNE: And we've got to get -- Peggy's had her hand up for a long time.

MR. MANN: Right.

MR. DIONNE: Peggy's a faithful attender of our events at Brookings.

MR. MANN: Okay.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay, I'll do my best. Garrett Mitchell from *The Mitchell Report*. And I want to go back to Bob Dylan because you and Tom are sitting -- sharing the stage.

MR. DIONNE: We remind you so much of Bob Dylan, that's why you want to -- (Laughter)

MR. MITCHELL: Right. You're sharing the stage and it was about two

weeks ago when you shared the stage and the roles were reversed. You describe your book as hopeful. The book that Tom and Norm have written, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, I would argue -- Tom might not agree -- that it's not so much a hopeful book as it is a we-better-get-serious-today book, and here are X-number of things that we might do to resolve the deep mire that we are in. And you may recall it was Susan Page at that meeting who suggested that if they wrote a third -- a sequel to *The Broken Branch* and *It's Even Worse Than It Looks*, it would *Run For Your Lives*.

So my question is, is your book -- I'm interested since you say the Bob Dylan thing about, you know, I don't need to talk to you because it's like talking to me, I'm interested to know whether knowing Tom, having read the book, are you looking at things and arriving at conclusions that are similar or not so similar?

MR. MANN: I especially want to thank you for that question, Gary. Yes, sir.

MR. SHORE: My name is Steven Shore. There's a fair amount of babbling about American exceptionalism, but no one has ever said exactly what it means. And so I'm wondering if you have -- could define it? Can you give a coherent definition? And is it a good thing or a bad thing?

MR. MANN: Oh, that's fun. Yes.

MS. ORCHOWSKI: Hi. Peggy Orchowski, I'm with the *Hispanic Outlook*. Could you talk a little bit about the whole concept of citizenship in terms of both communitarianism and especially liberalism? I know Alan Wolfe says it's -- liberals have a real hard time with immigration because they believe in equality, and just by definition immigrants, non-citizens, and citizens do have different rights. So could you talk about

that?

MR. MANN: Thank you. We'll gather -- let's gather two more questions. In the back, Pete, yeah.

MR. CHUTLEY: Thank you. Pete Chutley from Brookings. Could you clarify something, which is to what extent is communitarianism similar to federal government action? In other words, we tend to translate it's the federal government versus individualism, but maybe communitarianism is just focusing on local communities or small groups.

MR. MANN: Okay, and the final -- over here, please. Yeah. E.J., you're going to get 30 seconds to answer each of these questions, but.

MR. SOLVIK: Hi. Bart Solvik from Oslo University.

MR. MANN: Yes.

MR. SOLVIK: You touched on this notion that progressives need to go back to the Declaration, the Federalist Papers, et cetera. Is this just to deny the conservatives or Republicans the sole defenders of these values or are progressives just out of good ideas?

MR. DIONNE: Neither. (Laughter) Thank you for the question. Let me go backwards on that. Actually they kind of link together backwards.

No, I went back -- I don't think progressives are out of ideas. And I do think there's a real challenge to progressives, liberals, and social Democrats in the global economy that we live in. And I do think there is a struggle going on in parties of the center left, broadly all over the world, about what is -- how do we deal with this new situation? So I don't see it so much as progressives being out of ideas as progressives

not having fully figured out the right response. They have some notions, but that it's a complicated new situation that they are struggling to sort out.

No, I went back to the beginning. I mean, you know, on the one hand, yes, I want to contest our friends on the right because their view of our history would render all of us who are progressive outside the American tradition, and I do not believe that's true. I didn't write this book to ransack our history to find support for what I am for now. I went through our history to see what it actually teaches us. My conclusion, which people are free to dispute, is that they and we can find reasonable support for both claiming to operate within the broader American tradition. And I argue that the balances I describe are truer to our long tradition than how some, but not all, on the right would see individual liberty as the sole, you know, value within our tradition.

On the citizenship question, you know, Peggy has done a lot of work on immigration. And I'll just answer this way, Peggy, which is that one of the -- because I believe citizenship is so important, I am very uneasy with any solution to the immigration problem that would have us as a nation accept a large number of people who work here without citizenship. In other words, I believe our basic American notion that eventually everyone who is here becomes a citizen has saved us from a lot of trouble and is also the right idea. Because I don't think you can have a democratic republic unless the vast majority of your people share the same citizenship, share the same rights and responsibilities that go with that citizenship. So whenever I see, well, let's just have a lot of guest workers and that'll solve the problem, I am very uneasy with that because I think that could seriously undermine what I see as core commitments.

Now, that gets tricky because that means that I also believe that some

path will eventually have to be found for people who came here illegally, and that's where we begin to get into big arguments. But I think the rights of all of us are better protected if everyone eventually has a path to citizenship.

Babbling about American exceptionalism, I have -- I love American exceptionalism and I worry about it at the same time. I worry about it just because I think anyone who is progressive or has spent time around the world, and that's who Obama got himself in trouble with the first half of his famous answer on this, anyone, any of us who've spent time abroad know that everyone loves their own country, loves their own tradition. And when you talk about American exceptionalism it sounds like, well, we're trying to say that we are so different than everybody else and we either don't respect their tradition or somehow look down upon them from a lofty perch. And I've never liked people looking down on other people from a lofty perch, even if they were all American exceptionalists.

On the other hand, do I believe there is something exceptional about our particular history? Well, yes, I do. And, you know, originally, by the way, if I understand the history right, American exceptionalism was originally come up with as a way to explain why there were no socialists in America. And I believe it was originated on the left way back when. I've been meaning -- because I knew somebody would ask this, I've been meaning to recheck that history.

But we were one of the earliest republics on an extensive landmass. We were -- I mean, you can argue about the Romans, but their notion of citizenship was more constrained. We have the longest surviving Constitution in the world. We are unusual in the way in which we have drawn immigrants. More countries are becoming

like that, but we kind of pioneered a certain way of being. And there is a religious underpinning to American exceptionalism through our history, which we could argue about.

So I do think there is something exceptional about our history and I like to define that in terms of who we actually are and not in terms that look down on any other civilization. You know, although, again, in all candor, I'm sure there are -- I do like and love the American tradition because I think it has the seeds of sort of a quality democracy and community in it, which I think is, you know, a tradition to be proud of.

Hopeful, Tom and me. Tom and I are chronically hopeful. Somebody once called me a "feliciopath." (Laughter) And I think that, you know, Tom and I -- I'm going to speak for you, if I may.

MR. MANN: Please.

MR. DIONNE: And then you can dissent. You know, I think both of us have a sense of alarm about where we are now. And while we are hopeful, neither of us, I hope, is in insane and that I do not believe we can continue down this path we're on now with this kind of argument, this kind of dysfunction indefinitely. Our hopefulness partly comes from the famous Herb Stein, the conservative economist, who once said that if things can't keep going on like they are now, they don't. (Laughter) And do see us eventually getting to the point of correcting for this.

And as I say, I'm hopeful because I think we've been here before at various moments of our history and have managed to come out of it. And because as -- I was happy Lane talked about it, because I do think this new generation that's coming up has some real insight into what it will take to pull us back together. That is not an effort of

Baby Boomers saying we messed it up, it's your responsibility. I just happen to think they are, if I may use the term, an exceptional generation. And they are, in some ways, the *deus ex machina* of my book.

I think you all very, very much for coming.

MR. MANN: E.J., just -- I want to say that his performance here, filled with wit and wisdom, is even more extensively on display in his book. If my colleague, Norm Ornstein, were here he would say and it makes a great holiday gift. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: Father's Day.

MR. MANN: E.J. will go outside by the table for any of you who have not gotten your book signed.

MR. DIONNE: I'll sign multiple copies to all of your (inaudible).

MR. MANN: Thanks to E.J. and to all of you for coming.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. (Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012